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Civic Journ
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RESURRECTING CRITICAL THEORY: PUBLIC JOURNALISM

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RESURRECTING CRITICAL THEORY: PUBLIC JOURNALISM

INTRODUCTION

As the constant parade of change unfolds, it becomes necessary for social theorists to take their dynamic perceptions of the world and make additions and subtractions in seeking to explain how the world works and what the human actor's place in it is.

From this view the most obvious companion to theory is action. Scholars must also retool and rethink the intersection between theory and practice, and the impact that this praxis has upon conditions of social life.

The purpose of this essay shall be to take the concept of public journalism, a progressive movement within the newspaper business seeking to reconnect the citizenry at large with the process of news, and flesh out its potential as a plan of action. Specifically, the intent is to frame public journalism as a modified critical theory project -- critical theory here referring to the line of reasoning put forth by the scholars of the Frankfurt School in the 1930s. Two bodies of thought will be employed in attempting to make public journalism a modern day critical theory project. The first is the American philosophical tradition of pragmatism, dating approximately from the last decade of the 19th century. The second is the work of Jurgen Habermas, the eminent German who has forged a prominent place in the theory world as a post-critical theory scholar concerned with the redemption of the public sphere specifically and of the positive aspects of modernity in general. His idea of communicative action takes as one major point of departure the tradition of pragmatism.

It is the view here that although public journalism has been criticized for being only slightly more progressive than mainstream traditional journalism, if that, it shows potential for rejuvenating some semblance of public participation and responsibility for the

administration of local, small-scale democratic participation. With reflexivity as its critical edge, public journalism could be the mechanism through which the proactive, progress-oriented direction of pragmatism can be realized to some extent within the modern mass media framework. In the past five years, there have been several attempts at combining the work of Habermas and public journalism. This paper comes from a perspective seeking to integrate history, philosophy, journalism and sociology.

The proximity of pragmatism to sociology, and to communication research, has provided a philosophical context for examining modernity's celebration of instrumental values, according to Hanno Hardt. In its finest moments, pragmatism called for making everyday life better after a recognition of the inevitability of change. This is to be done by introducing the idea of social criticism as a sort of self-discovery.

In *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Adorno and Horkheimer stress that a simplistic, blind pragmatism soon loses its relation to the truth. Thus the Enlightenment must consider itself, if humankind is not to be totally betrayed.

This essay seeks then to use the pragmatist work of James, Dewey, Mead and others in tandem with the positive aspects of the Frankfurt School critical theorists including Habermas in an attempt to build practical legitimacy for public journalism as an action-based method to improve understanding and management of the dialectical relations between Americans, their mass media and social change.

PUBLIC JOURNALISM

The official beginnings of public journalism can be traced to the aftermath of the 1988 national elections, when negative campaigning had reached a zenith. The press coverage of the campaigns, in particular was

distressing to observers, who claimed that the media had become plagued by the "disease model" where conflict, not resolution, was the *modus operandi.* Critics charged that coverage had begun to stress political gamesmanship, mudslinging and winners and losers, instead of substantive issues involving real people. Jay Rosen, a professor at Columbia University, along with Midwestern newspaper editor Buzz Merritt and national columnist David Broder, all surfaced with criticisms of how the modern newspaper had devolved into what one wag called "horse-race journalism" fixated on sports-style, winner-loser coverage.

Rosen became the philosophical and intellectual engine behind a new movement, one designed to reconnect the citizens with the process of news, from conceptualizing to newsgathering and from gatekeeping to feedback. Merritt served as an expert "in the trenches" and writers like Broder contributed editorials and speaking engagements, all toward bringing about a change in the way the country thought about its media.

Rosen's doctoral dissertation had fashioned a dialogue between Dewey and Walter Lippmann, two luminaries of the early 20th century who held divergent opinions about the potential for citizens to take part in the workings of a democracy. Lippmann, following Plato's work in the ***Republic***, called for a small cadre of trained intellectuals to carry forward the intricacies of the modern state. He insisted that people were not capable of handling the tasks of government and statecraft, that they were scarcely able to assimilate the information created in a second-hand fashion by the "pictures in their heads" supplied by mass media. Conversely, Dewey believed that the ability for all members of a human society to take part in democracy was inchoate, still forming, and that society and its media must continue to build to the point where an inclusive participatory democracy was possible.

RESURRECTING CRITICAL THEORY

The public journalism movement picked up speed in 1993 when Rosen and the Pew Center formed the Project on Public Life and the Press. With the funding of a major institution, public journalism collected momentum. Five years after its birth, over 170 newspapers around the country were attempting some sort of public-type project.

Typical early public journalism efforts sought to use focus group and survey data to find out what people wanted from their news, and actually, what their conception of news was in the first place. News organizations sought to use citizen input to inform their practice of gathering and giving the news, including editorials by citizens and town meetings from time to time to check the pulse of the community.

A highly publicized program in Charlotte, N.C. called "Taking Back Our Neighborhoods" organized the citizens of the city into task forces which met to discuss civic problems and ways to help fight crime. In Merritt's home of Wichita, Ks., the paper published a voter's guide designed to define the issues of the upcoming 1990 campaigns from the perspective of the people. The reporters and editors pressed candidates to stop the negative discourse and engage with the issues, giving their opinions and plans if they should be elected. In a bold step, the Wichita paper decided that any failures to answer questions would "win" the candidate a blank space in the voter's guide next to his or her name.

The central notion of public journalism has changed somewhat since the beginning. Initially, practitioners were intent on getting the public more involved in the news process. No one, Rosen included, was able to detail how that was going to take place, although few criticized the basic worth of the idea on its face. Calls from critics for definitions and plans for the future met with consternation from public journalists, who kept insisting that the movement was more an inclination and feeling than an organized system of business.

As the movement and its theoretical base solidified, it became apparent to many that the real target of the movement may well be the industry itself, which has shown a

reluctance to accept the necessity for change, much less accept any sort of public journalism approach.

In the 1997 publication, *Theory and Practice: Lessons in Public Journalism*, Rosen, Merritt and Lisa Austin used the Kettering Foundation as a base to clarify the progress and process of the movement. One central notion to public journalism, wrote Rosen, is to remind journalists that they are members of the political community, not bystanders but stakeholders in seeing that community life goes well.

To him, practice inspires theory so that theory can inform practice. In this dialectical sense, the public journalism people are requesting for an autopsy and postmortem for traditional journalism, and development of a plan of action taking into account the changing nature of everyday life.

Merritt has said from the beginning that telling the news is not enough. Public journalists seek to improve the community's capacity to act on the news, engage it in a search for solutions and enable it to learn to grapple with, not just read about, social problems. He calls for, therefore, a departure from the disease model.

Rosen invokes Gene Patterson, an editor from St. Petersburg, Fla., and his notion of "whole journalism." Here journalists seek to create a healthy public climate by recognizing their responsibility for shaping discussion and the power they have in helping forming identities. Beyond simply becoming informed, citizens in public journalism communities learn to join in deliberation and discussion in a public square. Media outlets learn a respect for the ordinary, everyday aspects of life, instead of focusing on personalities, politicians and the like. These notions of civic participation, cooperation and problem-solving ideally make the democracy work more easily in the long run by augmenting the education of the public about these concepts and their techniques.

RESURRECTING CRITICAL THEORY

Rosen builds on this model, admitting that since the beginning of the movement he has, as the most visible spokesman, made mistakes in trying to trumpet the merits of public journalism, He offers some updated goals: defining the newspaper's dominion and examining how media frame stories, position stories and help shape a master narrative. In this latest public journalism manifesto, Rosen moves toward a reflexivity in the business that could promise to signify the most positive steps so far toward recognition from journalism itself. In the early days of the movement, critics of public journalism said that it seemed more like political advocacy than anything else.

"Leave reform to the reformers," said editor Max Frankel. Another high-ranking editor said that public journalists want to "Tell it and fix it too, they can't do both."

Many critics worried that public journalism was mainly a marketing gimmick to jump-start a newspaper business that had just lived through a traumatic downsizing operation in the late 1980s. Still others criticized the abandonment of objectivity.

But Rosen and others insist, as do many within the academy such as Schudson, that detachment and objectivity are figments of our imagination and always were. Instead of these traditional journalistic goals, the public journalists have always called for advocacy: an advocacy of participation, not a partisan political crusade but a call to action of every citizen. The movement wanted from the start to create a place for reflection, discussion and action.

In presenting a paper at the Public Journalism Critical Forum in South Carolina last fall, I defended public journalism not as a panacea for all problems associated with mass media and not as a guidebook for citizen use, as the early movement imagined. Instead I presented and defended public journalism as an inter-industry heuristic device, designed to force the business into laying bare its domain assumptions about the world and journalism's place in it. Schutz's phenomenology called for bracketing of taken-for-granted

notions; similarly, the public journalism movement envisions a re-investigation of baseline principles which have guided the business for over 100 years. Using this sort of reflexivity appears to be where the future of the movement is headed.

In South Carolina, the answer to the riddle of whither public journalism was hidden in the title of the conference, "Critical Forum." This led me to revisit critical theory and a propitious sideward glance then led to pragmatism. The similarities and affinities between these two notions facilitated continued historical reflection on public journalism, sociology and media philosophy.

With this in mind, I should like to assay the historical timeline of critical theory, then refresh the collective memory about the life and times of American pragmatism, subsequently constructing the bridge to future action across the broad intellectual shoulders of Jurgen Habermas.

CRITICAL THEORY

To understand critical theory and its proponents, one must first comprehend their idea of modernity. Since the Enlightenment, humankind turned increasingly to science, reason and logic instead of magic, myth and religion to explain the world. These became forces driving the accelerating rationalization of a maturing world, leading to increased organization, specialization and bureaucracy culminating in an advanced capitalist system. The modern world came to be identified with institutions, changing in many areas from tribal, local cultures to larger, more "advanced" communities giving way to massive industrial cities.

Weber's characterization of this process of rationalization valorized the positive contributions of "progress," yet criticized the unintended consequences seen in the "pathologies" of a modernity out of control. His notion of "disenchantment" described a

situation where humankind was pushed away from mystical notions of faith and religion and toward the use of reason. As a result, the world became more differentiated, organized and specialized, constructing an "iron cage" of instrumental, rational and technical means. As the rationality was gradually internalized, it became a part of the personality structure and hence part of the normative system of the society. Problems arose, depending on which sort of rationality came to dominate. Weber feared that calculative (also known as instrumental or end/means) rationality would come to tower over the world. Value rationality, more personal, communicative and based on a moral imperative, stood in danger of being washed away by capitalism, which represented for certain social thinkers such as Marx a peculiar convergence of rationalities where the calculative imperative would inevitably take final precedence.

Between the World Wars, a group of German scholars banded together at the Institute for Social Research and began a program of study which would come to be called critical theory. These members of the Frankfurt School took as their main course of intellectual struggle what Therborn would later characterize as the two horns of modernity: emancipation and exploitation. They constructed a self-conscious, reflective conception of Hegel's dialectic, using a critique of the political economy and citizens' place in it. Their persistent engagement with political and social issues fought against the fragmentation and atomism they thought were direct products of the pathologies of modernity, especially capitalism

Forced to flee Germany in the early 1930s -- they were all Jews -- the Frankfurt scholars moved their work to America, where it continued to re-posit many of the basic precepts of Marxism by focusing more on culture than on the modes of material production of classical Marxism. This "cultural Marxism" program incorporated conceptual notions of alienation, self-interest and conflict, much like traditional Marxism. Also, the critical

theorists believed as Marx had that the ideas of a culture are products of a society. They set about trying to prove that there was no objective knowledge or truth.

Here began the group's focus was to mitigate the power of what C. Wright Mills called "abstracted empiricism." The critical theorists believed that the personality of a society came directly from its economic and political organization, and in their 1944 work, *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer coined the term "culture industry" to describe what they felt was the result of extreme modernity: a totally administered society whose logic was increasingly mediated by capitalism and popular culture.

Adorno and Horkheimer wanted to set aside "appearance" from "essence" with their critical assessment of a mass culture industry that at the time was built upon motion pictures, radio and the mass press but would soon include television. They wrote of the false clarity and widespread deception endemic to mass production of cultural products. The flood of information stultifies the public, they insisted, schematizes events for people. In other words, mass media show them how to look at the world. Critical theorists warned that the same thing could eventually happen in the political arena.

The *Dialectic of Enlightenment* resonates more than ever today. It lays bare what the critical theorists saw as the cyclical, recurrent flow of content that excluded the truly new - here they referred to new as mainly alternative or non-status quo ideas -- and valorized the predominance of effect over actual, serious intellectual engagement with the material.

The world is filtered through the mass media, they wrote, and papered with a capitalist ideology privileging effectiveness, efficiency and speed, always promising yet never delivering, creating new needs in tandem with advertising and moving on before any of those needs can truly be met.

RESURRECTING CRITICAL THEORY

The culture industry brings a hollow harmony, a caricature of solidarity in popular culture leading people into "liberation" and away from reflection and the responsibility of thought, promulgating a vigorous support for the status quo and its ideas.

Those who underestimate the power of monotony are fools, according to Adorno, who added that the ever-expanding cultural-industrial complex tames the revolutionary instinct, performing the miracles of integration and the abolition of the individual. This "invisible victory" of movies, popular music and mass-produced, shallow radio programming turns the mass society into so many sleepwalkers, consumers who have internalized and naturalized the ideas of the capitalist society, which revolve around fads, fashions and Veblen's status gleaned through conspicuous consumption.

Thus, critical theory projects such as *Dialectic of Enlightenment* stressed reflexivity: the goal was to make the Enlightenment consider itself. They believed that the real function of philosophy lies in its critique of what is prevalent. Their work examined the disintegration of various elements of society and community and the role that mass media played in this disintegration. As Adorno and Horkheimer attacked popular culture, Walter Benjamin questioned the reproducibility of art and Leo Lowenthal interrogated literature and the impact of modernity on language. Lowenthal's work would presage to an extent the post-1968 linguistic turn led by post-structuralists such as Levi-Strauss, deconstructionists such as Derrida and British cultural studies scholars like Stuart Hall.

Herbert Marcuse became one of the theoretical fathers of the New Left with his portraits of the modern state and its quasi-totalitarian subduing of the individual with technology, surveillance and hyper-bureaucracy.

The Frankfurt School thinkers loosely placed journalism into the category of popular culture. Adorno and Marcuse both wrote about how information often becomes a tool of manipulation for the state, and how mass media constructs the topical environment,

predating later scholarly work isolating the media's agenda-setting role (done by McCombs, Shaw and others).

Another important note on the work of the critical theorists: With their aforementioned criticism of strictly empirical, logico-deductive research, they challenged the theoretical basis of traditional social science. Lowenthal sensitized scholars to language use and analysis of politics in cultural settings. Marcuse decried what he saw as the positivist tendency to follow the fallacy of the misplaced concreteness. Here he meant the Enlightenment affinity for scientific method and positivism, plus adherence to belief in absolute notions of truth and knowledge.

According to Hardt, in the history of communication research, critical theorists played an important role in positing an alternative, interdisciplinary plan for describing the social world, dependent more on culture and people than on empirical measurement and testable hypotheses. They criticized the positivist dichotomy of fact divided from value, which allowed science to offer "neutral" results and evade the responsibility of making a moral commitment by engaging in "value-free research."

For a group which from the beginning insisted that the ideas of an age come from its society, a theory-building effort or empirical research project could hardly hesitate to lay open its assumptions to scrutiny. If the ideas come from a ruling class then it was clear that empirical, quantitative research was the ruler of social science at that time. The Frankfurt exiles did their work with a definite eye toward the political, although none with the exception of Marcuse ever became personally involved with any such movement. Still, despite the efforts of the critical theorists, the tide of communication research swept into the area of empiricism, science and strict fact-value division. Not until the late 1960s would sociology and history bring forth a challenge to the dominant research tradition.

RESURRECTING CRITICAL THEORY

TWEAKING EARLY SOCIAL THOUGHT

Early American social theory was dominated to a great extent by the functionalism of Talcott Parsons and the pragmatism of James, Mead, Dewey and others. These two traditions shared certain similarities which have been termed peculiarly American, including a preoccupation with cohesiveness and social solidarity. A brief synthesis of these views is vital to our positioning of public journalism as a modified critical theory project.

Functionalism was primarily concerned with conceptions of order, integration, socialization and shared values. Parsons and his intellectual offspring -- prominently Robert K. Merton -- searched for the nature of a universal normative order which the society learned to internalize. Its main defect as a program of study proved to be an inadequate conception and consideration of the ideas of scarcity of resources and distribution of power. Functionalist thought took for granted, according to critical theory, the desirability of the status quo and the inevitability of social equilibrium after a period of disequilibrium.

The pragmatists, on the other hand, rejected the idea of universal truth, proposing instead a plurality centered on language, experience and shifting, emergent meanings stemming from human communication and interaction. Building from Simmel's notions of reciprocity and intersubjectivity, pragmatists searched for what James called the "cash value" of an idea. This was a practical bunch of thinkers looking for concrete, particular and multiple truths. Through joint acts forming collective behavior and a symbolic collective order (these general ideas are from Mead) the pragmatists formed what would later be described as a notion of "mesostructure" or a case where individual (social) and institutional structures meshed through human activity. The program was for recalling history in order to map a course of action, a course where inquiry, as Peirce said,

empowers the community. The truths are determined by decisions made by the community, by the common people; truth here is what is expedient and useful.

James searched out places for actors in the continual process of "becoming," which he wrote was rooted in social responsibility. To James, change is inevitable and a community exists only in proximity to "real fights," to responsibility as a people.

Mead thought that community was an imperfect, incomplete entity impeded by distorted realities. He stressed a social and political commitment to change, trying to show that revolutionary change could be achieved by essentially conservative means.

As strong as the pragmatist strain was in social thought, there gradually evolved a perceived need for critical insights into the relation between communication studies and social theory. Critical theorists realized that control of the production of discourse militated against non-coercive consensus building, and that shifting the boundaries of research helped formulate political agendas. According to Hardt, as they adopted certain pragmatic notions and discarded others, they instituted an attack on orthodoxy which would itself become more orthodox 40 years later.

Critical of what they saw as the permanently entrenched tradition of classical liberalism, the Frankfurt School scholars chose to focus on the dialectic between society and the subject. In doing this they moved beyond the passivity and neutrality implied by the pragmatists, dispensing with the neutral detachment of shared experience and the fact-value split, to infuse pragmatism with a necessary political component. They shared the pragmatic concern with communication and community, that much is certain. But they believed in the Hegelian notion of the unfinished nature of theory, a theory which must always be open to revision by the critique of conditions of its construction. Adorno whittled away at the problematic assumption of shared meanings held by both functionalists and pragmatists while Marcuse questioned the mass media's potential to evoke true shared

experience. Critical theory thus attempted to subvert what was seen as the inbuilt constraints of the earlier traditions -- traditions which failed to take note of notions of power and inequality of resource distribution. One of the second-generation scholars, Jurgen Habermas, has become the foremost intellectual on the matters of community, the public sphere and constructive critiques of modernity. His work reflects a pragmatic version of critical theory seeking to redeem the positive aspects of modernity.

HABERMAS

Hegel, with his dialectic, was the first to construct a clear conception of modernity, taking into consideration the contradictions of reality. He believed in questioning the givenness, although much social theory -- pragmatism and functionalism included here -- partially fails to consider its own knowledge foundations. By embracing a self-conscious look at historicity, thereby breaking open the irresponsible fact-value division, social theory could begin to articulate the possibility of emancipation by searching for actors with transformative capacity.

Habermas' notions of communicative competence and discursive consciousness privilege communication as the potential catalyst for realizing the positive aspects of modernity. Habermas believes, as did Weber, that the rationalization process of modernity is inevitable, to a great extent natural, and has many promising aspects. However, he also thinks that in the process of increasing bureaucratization, the system (economic, political realm) intrudes upon the lifeworld (personal and public spheres of human interaction) forcing the pathologies of modernity to the fore.

In Habermas' ideal speech situation, non-coercive consensus-building enables citizens in the public sphere to deliberate, argue and discuss in attempts to reach the expedient truths of the pragmatists. In this manner, a subject gaining access to deliberation in the public sphere gradually builds confidence in his/her validity claims of utterances, by

recognizing and incorporating the viewpoints of others and making necessary reciprocal gestures toward hermeneutic understanding.

Habermas inherited the immanent critique of his critical theory forebears, bringing the critique more into the open air of political possibility than many of the original Frankfurt School theorists. This immanent critique of the domination of nature -- as opposed to the coexistence with nature -- chipped away at a reduced human autonomy molded in place by the iron cage of rationality.

Habermas thus believes that as society becomes more administered, more and more communicative encounters take place without a human element. These encounters take the form of impersonal economic exchanges rather than identity-building, personal acts, corresponding in a negative sense to Parsons' notion of value generalization, where internalized norms become mechanisms transferring social situations into the system. The practical intent of Habermas' work is to fight systematic repression of key aspects of meaning. He buys into the notion that community is formed through communication and maintained by accounting for responsibility, like the pragmatists such as James. He avoids the pessimism of Weber and later critical theorists by focusing on the rationality implicit in the speech act itself. This follows Mead, who insisted that the self is formed only in response and in accounting for the generalized other, with the mutuality inherent in considering the other person's viewpoint. So to Habermas the potential for emancipation -- for realizing what he termed the universal condition for communicative competence -- rests in the public sphere, where everyone has a chance to debate and wrangle for the "truths" of the matter at hand.

He posits that the chances for this communicative rationality -- as opposed to the technical, problem-solving rationality associated with the system -- are at optimum levels during breaks or "crises" in modernity. During such breaks -- roughly equated with the antithesis in Hegel's dialectic -- Habermas believes that identity formation takes place. In

other words, identity is formed through a questioning of traditional forms and in an assessment of conditions governing the production of knowledge and truth. Reflection upon historicity can only lead to change, which is taken as inevitable, hence desirable, especially in comparison with mechanical value generalization which by its functional nature often leaves conditions of knowledge production unattended.

Habermas seeks to rescue the positive aspects of modernity, via the non-coercive, communicative potential of progress. Despite featuring relatively undeveloped notions of communicative rationality's practical application to real-life situations, his work is impossible to ignore. He holds to the optimistic notion that the pathologies of modernity can be mitigated with attention to reflexive thought seemingly missing in early social theory. This vital belief in the emancipatory character of modernity is present in the critical theory program of Adorno et al. It is the unfinished character of theory -- taken directly from Hegel's championing of society's interpretive dialogue with the past -- that is served best in the use of a dialectic approach as a logical form. The critical theorists stood on the shoulders of the functionalists and pragmatists, infusing their conceptions of power and agency into those somewhat primitive models. Habermas went from critical theory, added his belief in the project of modernity and set about reaffirming a normative basis for communication and progress. This leads us back to the present, where a new journalism movement seeks to remake the direction of the news business by questioning some of the baseline assumptions imbedded in a traditional field, What remains is for us to examine the public journalism idea, in light of the social theory tour we have negotiated. Perhaps this controversial idea can reinvigorate Habermas' exquisite theoretical craftsmanship with some of the pragmatic action it seems to be lacking.

CONCLUSION

Here the keys to framing public journalism can be enumerated. The foremost must be reflexivity. By instituting an examination of the assumptions that have underlain traditional journalism -- notions which have centered on ideas of objectivity and detachment -- the public journalism movement can dust off the hackneyed tenets of the business and seek to update them for the 21st century and beyond.

Such a program draws from the critical theory of the Frankfurt School prominently in searching for the identity-forming potential of communication, both from an individual standpoint and a community standpoint. Since communication is predominantly done through mass media, this offers the best vehicle through which to realize the strongest facets of pragmatism as well as satisfy the basic requirements of a critical social theory. In the continuing dialectic between the self and society, locating the sites for Habermas' consensual deliberation, of the "ideal speech act" is a vital step. Mass media can be a site for domination through repetition of generalized values such as consumerism and individualism, or it can be a site for genuine participation, argumentation and political action.

If journalists are retrained to see themselves as stakeholders -- instead of disinterested bystanders -- perhaps the product they transmit can do its part in enabling community, through communication, to grow, thereby inspiring augmented responsibility, accountability and perspective. By urging the journalism enterprise to recognize and confront the power it holds in agenda-setting and framing stories, this critical theory of journalism, public journalism, lays the groundwork for an advocacy of pure action: not an advocacy for particular political agendas, but one of citizen mobilization. As Habermas searches for conditions auspicious for the ideal speech act, public journalism should lead

the way in search for the ideal exchange between news and news target. As news has become a commodity -- bringing to light the truth in one of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment's* loudest predictions -- it becomes obvious that here is one of the so-called intrusions of the system upon the lifeworld. As journalists struggle to juggle the bottom-line financial statement with the quest for informing and mobilizing the public, they are weighted down by what can be termed "infotainment." As the line between entertainment and news has become blurred -- witness the proliferation of news magazines, radio talk shows and on-line offerings such as the Drudge Report -- consumers of news have become distracted from the task of truly analyzing the information they receive. It is Adorno's nightmare come true when film, television and other forms of entertainment from the culture industry outflank serious intellectual thought for many citizen users of media.

This brings us to a consideration of the cash value of public journalism. In classic pragmatist fashion, we ask what an idea, or a theory, can actually generate in the way of real-life, tangible value. Here is where public journalism has always hit a snag. While it makes sense on its face, the theory behind public journalism makes an enormous assumption on good faith, and that is that the public at large is capable of three things: 1. assimilating the vast glut of information available and sorting it into separate "news" and "entertainment" categories; 2. that the public sphere, where consensus-building and argumentation are to transpire, exists; and 3. that after deliberation in a so-called public sphere, the decisions made there can be implemented in some way or at least integrated into the flow of judgments emanating from the decision-making apparatus of government.

It is my feeling that none of the assumptions are completely unproblematic. However, the focus of this essay has been to flesh out the underpinnings and historical antecedents of a promising new journalism movement. Still, I would be remiss in failing to mention that the strongest criticism of the public journalism movement comes from Plato, Machiavelli and Lippmann through my own line of reasoning. It is, simply, that the vast

majority of people are not equipped quite naturally with the capacity or training to take a serious part in statecraft. In this country's elective system, democracy is of a representative nature as opposed to a truly participatory one. This entails that the feedback the public gives, whether it be from a nominally unified public sphere or in some more haphazard manner, acts in a secondary, after-the-fact fashion, as merely opinion. It does not influence to any great extent the decisions that elected officials make. A painfully relevant case in point would be the drastic slippage between apparent "public opinion" of President Clinton and the tiresome machinations of the Senate in the past months.

CONCLUSION CONCLUDED

But back to the thesis of the essay, which is to identify, in theory, public journalism as the brainchild of pragmatism and critical theory.

If it is believed that inquiry empowers the growth of community, then this sort of inquiry is served by superimposing reflexivity on the business of journalism. If it is also taken as defensible that change is inevitable -- and here the recurring logical form of the dialectic seems to be once again in order -- then one can place the retooling of the journalism ethic within the confines of the "continual becoming" which so much social theory describes. Here, the search for transformative actors is of paramount import. Will it be the people, haggling, negotiating and communicating undistorted notions from a public sphere? Or is that a utopian dream, as the critical theorists charged? Will this "becoming process" be driven by the press, or was Marcuse's assertion of the overrated weight of mass media in changing the world a well-founded one? Or will the inevitable change be recognized much as the Canadian McLuhan described, in the rear-view mirror of hindsight? This echoes Marx' assertion that history is made behind the backs of the actors, without their vision or consent, and in its recasting of the agency-structure debate gives one fodder for another essay.

RESURRECTING CRITICAL THEORY

In spite of the complications to communicative rationality engendered by the ever-burgeoning population, and despite increasing state intervention into the regulation of the capitalist market, Habermas maintains an optimism that somehow the positive aspects of modernity will be redeemed amid the contradictions leading to modernity's pathologies. It is the view of this essay that a credible step toward realizing this lofty and elusive ambition could come from a synthesis of pragmatism and critical theory: enter public journalism. It is not a seamless mesh: the practice of public journalism is in its formative stages and thus the cash value hangs in the balance. But public journalism is an attempt at praxis, a shoving off from the shores of the neutral fact-value distinction. It seeks to engage theory in the context of active, everyday use.

If language is taken to be the primary vehicle of social integration, and if communication through language is understood as a social learning process, then journalism would seem to be an ideal site for experiment. Habermas wrote that critical thinking from the media consumer is often largely in abeyance, facilitating a condensation of communicative action and relieving the consumer's need to negotiate and solve public problems. The reinvention of journalism's task under public journalism would reinstitute a model of individual consumer responsibility, concurrently pushing critical theory's theoretical notions into the everyday world.

It is incumbent upon us to struggle with the making of meaning, and to valorize this struggle in light of a dynamic, increasingly mass-mediated landscape. With its self-reflexivity and historicity intact, public journalism stands poised to assist this exercise.

RESURRECTING CRITICAL THEORY

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CONSTRUCTING MEANING: THE ROLE OF THE AUDIENCE IN NEWS WRITING

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CONSTRUCTING MEANING: THE ROLE OF THE AUDIENCE IN NEWS WRITING

Writing theory and practice are shifting from a linear product paradigm that focuses on delivery of facts to an interactive process paradigm that focuses on construction of meaning. This shift is evident in composition, anthropology, linguistics, philosophy, literary theory and psychology, and it is the root of the civic-traditional journalism debate. This paper traces the history of the construction of meaning movement and shows how it parallels the development of more interactive communication models.

CONSTRUCTING MEANING: THE ROLE OF THE AUDIENCE IN NEWS WRITING

Scholarship in writing and reading over the past two decades has developed under a new paradigm of communication called social construction of meaning, or, simply, constructionism.[1] Although the traditional paradigm assumes meaning is contained in a text, the new paradigm assumes readers interact with texts to create meaning. The old paradigm presented knowledge as linear — meaning is conveyed from the author to a text and finally to a reader. The new paradigm claims "reading is not a passive activity in which you just take in information; rather it is always an active one in which, whether consciously or not, you create your version of the text."[2]

According to constructionism, assigning subjective meanings to objective facts involves a social process of exchanging signs that refer to still more facts and interpreting the responses of others to these facts in a process of agreement or disagreement until each interacting mind understands how other minds interpret the facts. In other words, meanings for natural and social objects are constructed by individuals in negotiation with other members of their communities.[3] The constructionist paradigm suggests that the primary purpose of news media is to help individuals construct meanings with other members of their community.[4]

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[1] Kenneth A. Bruffee, "Social Construction, Language, and the Authority of Knowledge: A Bibliographical Essay, 48 *College English* 8 (December 1986); Maxine Hairston, "The Winds of Change: Thomas Kuhn and the Revolution in the Teaching of Writing, 33 *College Composition and Communication* 1 (February 1982); Chester Laine and Lucille Schultz, "Composition Theory and Practice: The Paradigm Shift," *Volta Review* (1985); Kathleen McCormick, Gary Waller with Linda Flower, *Reading Texts: Reading, Responding, Writing* (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath Company, 1987) 5-9.

[2] McCormick, 6.

[3] Linda Flower, *The Construction of Negotiated Meaning: A Social Cognitive Theory or Writing* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1994).

[4] Eric P. Bucy and Paul D'Angelo, "The Crisis of Communication for Citizenship: Normative Critiques of News and Democratic Processes," (research paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Baltimore, 1998).

In a quest for scientific objectivity, traditional journalists routinely strip subjective connotations from facts in an effort to present "just the facts" or "information" to their readers. This journalistic ritual follows the linear paradigm of knowledge, or epistemology, and requires no attempt to understand how readers construct meaning from their texts. This chapter shows how an epistemological shift away from defining knowledge as a static product of detached observation to defining knowledge as a social process of constructing meaning through interaction is affecting theories of writing and reading, including news writing and reading.

A Cognitive Revolution

In *Acts of Meaning*, psychologist Jerome Bruner describes a current "Cognitive Revolution" and calls for the development of a culturally oriented psychology that embraces the idea that people can understand "knowledge and values from multiple perspectives without loss of commitment to one's own values."[5] He claims, "It is man's participation *in* culture and the realization of his mental powers *through* culture that make it impossible to construct a human psychology on the basis of the individual alone."[6] No person is an island. No one lives in a vacuum.

Bruner introduces his thesis by saying he is describing a cognition concerned with meaning-making, "one that has been proliferating these last several years in anthropology, linguistics, philosophy, literary theory, psychology, and, it would almost seem, wherever one looks these days."[7] His text is rich with terms and phrases that parallel the product to process paradigm shift in English composition theory that has focused attention on the audience's role in the writer's composing process. According to Bruner,[8]

> * The revolution brought "mind" back into the human sciences after a long cold

[5] Jerome Bruner, *Acts of Meaning* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), 30.

[6] Ibid., 12.

[7] Ibid., 2.

[8] Ibid., 1-30.

winter of objectivism.

* The movement was diverted by the success of the computer and the attraction of using it as a model for the mind.

* It focused upon the symbolic activities that human beings employed in constructing and in making sense not only of the world, but of themselves.

* During the diversion, emphasis shifted from "meaning" to "information," from the *construction* of meaning to the *processing* of information.

* Symbolic systems, which are almost invisible because they are already "there," deeply entrenched in culture and language, make users a reflection of the community.

* "There is no such thing as human nature independent of culture."

* Meaning is public, shared and negotiated.

* People are governed by shared meanings and values.

* Cultures are not homogenous, and the study of anthropology is an instrument in the management of diversity.

* Human values are communal and consequential — they fulfill functions for members of a community.

* The constructivism of cultural psychology is a profound expression of a democratic culture.

Bruner's catalog points to a paradigm shift in epistemology, a change in the definition of what people call knowledge. The following paragraphs trace some aspects of this shift that are pertinent to news writing.

An encyclopedic text on English composition was published in 1971: James Kinneavy's *A Theory of Discourse*. This work of synthesis set the stage for more recent research on writing by criticizing the state of English composition:

> Composition is so clearly the stepchild of the English department that it is not a legitimate area of concern in graduate studies, is not even recognized as a subdivision of the discipline of English in a recent manifesto put out by the major professional association (MLA) of college English teachers, in some universities is not a valid area of scholarship for advancement in rank, and is generally the teaching province of graduate assistants or fringe members of the department."[9]

Kinneavy helped spur a movement to return English composition to a higher priority of English departments, which had come to be dominated by professors of literature, while basic writing courses — so important to success that they were required of all university students — were relegated to graduate teaching assistants. This movement has spurred much scholarly research, debate and dialogue on the role of audience analysis in English composition since the publication of Kinneavy's book.

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9 Kinneavy, James L. *A Theory of Discourse* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1971), 1 (note omitted).

Kinneavy presented a theory of composition that raised discourse to at least the level of grammar and semantics. Many composition teachers in this school of thought believe that students learn to write before they learn to reduce sentences to their grammatical parts.

Kinneavy divides the study of language into two theoretical frameworks. The field of linguistics addresses the text in relation to reality, and the field of discourse addresses the interactions of writer, reader and reality.

The communication triangle that joins "encoder, decoder and reality" looks deceptively simple (See Appendix A.), but its primary importance is to counteract popular linear models of communication that treat language as something that is produced by an individual and delivered to others. The communication triangle clearly suggests two-way interactions among writers, readers and the world. It also suggests that various points of view surround any particular text, and this opens the door to pluralistic views of writing, meaning and knowledge. The communication triangle offers an important framework for integrating the diversity and unity of a culture.

The concept of pluralism, which holds that people can understand knowledge and values from multiple perspectives without loss of commitment to their own self-identity, also has been advanced by philosopher John Dewey, educator Paulo Freire and science historian Thomas Kuhn. Educators who teach pluralism stress that accepting more than one valid interpretation of a text does not mean that any interpretation is valid.[10] Just as in any epistemology, there are rules to determine truth.

Dewey agreed with philosophers John Locke and Ralph Waldo Emerson, who stressed the importance of experience in learning. These philosophers never suggested that students stop reading, but both were extremely aware of the transitive and abstract nature of language. Despite the value of studying great works of past writers, each generation must write its own books to define itself for the next generation.[11] Texts of the distant past can

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[10] Joseph Kolupke, interview by author, 21 November 1998. Dr. Kolupke is professor of English and head of the English, Theatre and Communications Department at Adams State College, Colo.

[11] Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The American Scholar," In *Selected Writings of Emerson*, ed. Donald McQuade (New York: Random House, 1981), 49.

inspire and guide, but they are no substitute for experience:

> Society not only continues to exist *by* transmission, *by* communication, but it may fairly be said to exist *in* transmission, *in* communication. There is more than a verbal tie between the words common, community, and communication. Men live in a community in virtue of the things which they have in common; and communication is the way in which they come to possess things in common. What they must have in common in order to form a community or society are aims, beliefs, aspirations, knowledge — a common understanding — like-mindedness as the sociologists say.[12]

Learning is a complex set of smaller activities that often appear to be opposites, according to Dewey. It connects questioning to answering, searching to finding, wondering to knowing, beginning to ending. The teacher may know what he or she would like students to know, but students can only wonder at the beginning of a course of study. Teachers attempt to bridge this gap with a map that shows the students how to get from ignorance to knowledge. Unfortunately, most students have never seen the territory or the map before; they don't recognize the highway numbers, city names or landmarks. That's because the map was made by someone who had already made the trip; the curriculum represents the end of the journey — not the beginning.[13]

Dewey, who considered journalists as educators, claimed the best resource for a journey into unknown territory was an expert guide — one who has made the trip, or at least a similar one; one who is not only a professor of facts but also a student of human nature. The advantage of having such a teacher-student as a guide is the opportunity to share interactive dialogue during the experience.

Freire's theory of education includes such a teacher-student learning facilitator to supplant the common bank-deposit metaphor of education[14] in which the teacher deposits knowledge in students, much like filling empty vessels. The inertia of such metaphors is revealed when a self-confident and creative teacher breaks this stereotype and behaves more like a facilitator, coach, advisor or peer: many students become confused and

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12 John Dewey, *Democracy and Education* (NY:The Free Press, 1916), 4.

13 Dewey, "The Child and the Curriculum," in *Dewey on Education:Selections* (NY: Columbia University Teachers College Press, 1959), 103.

14 Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, (NY:Continuum, 1970), 57-74.

uncomfortable with such a new experience. They want to be told what is expected of them. The successful students, in particular, want to the play the game they already have mastered. Exploring new territory is unsettling. Freire writes about such a fear of freedom in an oppressive Brazilian society:

> Not infrequently, training course participants call attention to "the danger of conscientizacao" in a way which reveals their own fear of freedom. Critical consciousness, they say, is anarchic. Others add that critical consciousness may lead to disorder. Some, however, confess: Why deny it? I was afraid of freedom. I am no longer afraid![15]

Freire claims any knowledge that is thoughtlessly impressed on the next generation is indoctrination and, therefore, a form of oppression. Educators in free and democratic cultures should strive to impart knowledge without indoctrination, he explains, and thus educate their students without oppressing them. Education without oppression has implications for methodology, curriculum, writing and reading.

A critical look at oppression in education can help avoid similar oppression in journalism. Teachers often measure lessons by effectiveness, or "how much they learned today," when perhaps they should be asking, "Was the knowledge they gained liberating?" Freire argues that liberation is highly motivating for students and that oppression comes from teachers who are prisoners of a "circle of certainty" and who suffer from an "absence of doubt."[16] These principles apply equally to news writers.

Liberation of the mind can lead to profound action, though all action must be critically evaluated according to reason. Hopeful action in transforming the world fulfills the "ontological and historical vocation of becoming more fully human," argues Freire, who accomplishes this by posing problems to his students as a partner in learning, calling for action, evaluating the results and calling for more action. This cycle repeats endlessly, and indeed, no one is ever completely human or educated: "The unfinished character of men and the transformational character of reality necessitates that education be an on-

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[15] Ibid., 19.

[16] Ibid., 23.

going activity."[17] and obviously, journalism plays a role in continuing adult education.

Cognition and Science

This epistemological shift does not apply only to the arts and humanities. In *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*,[18] Kuhn helps scientific researchers see the process by which science changes. Students are trained early in their educations by teaching methods that present scientific knowledge as progressing linearly from one step to the next and one era to the next. Kuhn claims that science actually goes through rather difficult periods of revolution and confusion as old paradigms are challenged and replaced by new paradigms. He also explains that paradigms are a way of seeing the world; a paradigm can encompass many articulated models and theories that are compatible with a particular world view even when the overarching paradigm is not fully articulated.

Kuhn presents several examples from the history of science to support his thesis. One involves the development of the theory of electricity:

> One early group of theorists, following seventeenth-century practice, regarded attraction and frictional generation as the fundamental electrical phenomena. This group tended to treat repulsion as a secondary effect due to some sort of mechanical rebounding and also to postpone for as long as possible both discussion and systematic research on Gray's newly discovered effect, electrical conduction. Other "electricians" (the term is their own) took attraction and repulsion to be equally elementary manifestations of electricity and modified their theories and research accordingly. (Actually, this group is remarkably small — even Franklin's theory never quite accounted for the mutual repulsion of two negatively charged bodies.) But they had as much difficulty as the first group in accounting simultaneously for any but the simplest conduction effects. Those effects, however, provided the starting point for still a third group, one which tended to speak of electricity as a "fluid" that could run through conductors rather than as an "effluvium" that emanated from non-conductors. This group, in its turn, had difficulty reconciling its theory with a number of attractive and repulsive effects. Only through the work of Franklin and his immediate successors did a theory arise that could account with something like equal facility for very nearly all these effects and that therefore could and did provide a subsequent generation of "electricians" with a common paradigm for its research.[19]

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17 Ibid., 71-72.

18 Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2d ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).

19 Ibid., 14-15.

Kuhn's examples — including the great paradigm shift from the sun revolving around the earth to the earth revolving around the sun — are rich in metaphoric language, which helps scientists see the world anew. Scientific knowledge was advanced when electricians began to think of electricity as a fluid running through conductors, and Copernicus explained his astronomical observations by making the unpopular claim that the earth was not the center of the universe.

Such paradigm shifts advance — or at least change — scientific knowledge, but they emerge from a violent period of controversy and debate when an increasing number of problems can't be solved under the old paradigm and proponents of a new paradigm aren't yet established in their field. For a period, the new paradigm can't even be imagined by many members of the normal scientific community. Following such a new paradigm can be considered heresy by those following the traditional paradigm. Conversely, when research proceeds with little controversy and much certainty, Kuhn claims, scientists are merely confirming "those phenomena and theories that the paradigm already supplies."[20]

Kuhn expands the theory of paradigm beyond science to any field that involves systematic rules and procedures for discovering knowledge. Rules can be derived from paradigms, he explains, but paradigms can guide knowledge even in the absence of rules.[21] This is another way of reinforcing the idea that paradigms are ways of seeing the world regardless of whether they are consciously articulated. They exert great influence regardless of whether they are logical or rational. Even normal or traditional paradigms often are invisible because they are so firmly entrenched in language and thought about the world. Most theoretical models represent subsets of such overarching paradigms.

Kuhn also reinforces the idea that practice precedes theory,[22] established scientists

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[20] Ibid., 24.

[21] Ibid., 42.

[22] Ibid., 47.

resist change,[23] and during crises, scientists return to philosophy.[24] He also questions the textbook notion of discovery.[25] Kuhn's ideas have important implications for journalism, which is experiencing considerable criticism and controversy from within and without the field. Besides academic research that seems to go in a myriad of directions, practitioners are hotly debating civic journalism, which can be seen as part of the paradigm shift in writing from linear product to interactive process.

Despite the difficulty of a paradigm shift, once proponents reach a critical mass, Kuhn explains, the new paradigm opens doors to additional discoveries because researchers are looking where they did not look before. Uranus had been observed for nearly a century before astronomers agreed it was a planet. This "shift of vision" prepared astronomers to see 20 other minor planets or asteroids during the next 70 years.[26] "Whatever he may see," Kuhn says, "the scientist after a revolution is still looking at the same world."[27]

The power of Kuhn's influential book stems from the fact that he doesn't stop with a definition of paradigms. He goes on to show that most education focuses on the mundane stable periods rather than the truth-revealing revolutions. "By disguising such changes, the textbook tendency to make the development of science linear hides a process that lies at the heart of the most significant episodes of scientific development."[28]

Can researchers know they are in a paradigm shift? Kuhn proposes these signs: "The proliferation of competing articulations, the willingness to try anything, the expression of explicit discontent, the recourse to philosophy and to debate over fundamentals, all these

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[23] Ibid., 62-65, 90.

[24] Ibid., 88.

[25] Ibid., 55-57.

[26] Ibid., 116.

[27] Ibid., 129.

[28] Ibid., 140.

are symptoms of a transition from normal to extraordinary research."[29] ... "Probably the single most prevalent claim advanced by the proponents of a new paradigm is that they can solve the problems that have led the old one to a crisis."[30] These signs can be seen in the current civic journalism-traditional journalism debate raging in journalism reviews.[31]

Not everyone will see the new paradigm, however, and this can cause considerable misunderstanding: "To the extent ... that two scientific schools disagree about what is a problem and what is a solution, they will inevitably talk through each other when debating the relative merits of their respective paradigms,"[32] and, "Communication across the revolutionary divide is inevitably partial. ... That is why a law that cannot even be demonstrated to one group of scientists may occasionally seem intuitively obvious to another."[33]

As Bruner points out, signs of a paradigm shift are evident in many of the social sciences today. The signs center on the nature of knowledge, and they are being debated in psychology, philosophy, linguistics and journalism, to name only a few fields. Any change in the paradigm of knowing affects all disciplines of study and practice.

Inner Dialogue

Kenneth Bruffee is one of the social constructionists of English composition theory. He claims this epistemic movement has gone by the name of "new pragmatism," "dialogism" or simply "Kuhn," who said knowledge was "intrinsically the common property of a group

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29 Ibid., 91.

30 Ibid., 153.

31 Renita Coleman, "The Treatment of Public Journalism in Three Media Review Journals" (research paper presented at the annual convention of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Chicago, 1997).

32 Ibid., 109.

33 Ibid., 149-150.

or else nothing at all."[34] Bruffee, like Bruner, notes the interdisciplinary parallels of this paradigm shift by asserting that related articles and books are found in "psychology, sociology, political science, and philosophy as well as literary criticism."

Bruffee says people generate knowledge by justifying their beliefs socially and by thinking, which is an "internalized version of conversation."[35] This inner dialogue is a key component of constructionism as well as composition theories that focus on audience analysis. Bruffee traces this movement to Kuhn, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Martin Heidegger and Dewey. Despite citing symbolic interactionist Erving Goffman, a sociologist who claimed "even what we think of as the individual self is a construct largely community generated and community maintained," and the patron of symbolic interaction, George Herbert Mead, Bruffee claims, "Mead anticipated much social constructionist thought but had little influence."[36] Bruffee bases his theory on Lev Vygotsky, "whose *Thought and Language* and *Mind in Society* are books that many composition teachers are already familiar with."[37]

Vygotsky was a Soviet psychologist who extended the work of Swiss child psychologist Jean Piaget during the 1920s. His work was not familiar to many Americans until the '60s, however, when *Thought and Action* was published, and the '70s, when *Mind in Society* was published. Piaget had established "instrumental language" of children talking aloud to themselves or imaginary friends as they learned new tasks. Piaget believed instrumental language eventually disappeared with maturity, but Vygotsky argued this

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34 Bruffee, 774.

35 Ibid., 777.

36 Ibid., 779

37 Ibid., 785

language became internalized as inner speech and the very essence of thought.[38]

In contrast to Bruffee's brush off of Mead, John Pickering and Martin Skinner introduce Vygotsky in *From Sentience to Symbols* by summarizing Mead's theory of symbolic interaction. "As Mead has pointed out, telescoped within the meaning of a word is the sum total of our experience with respect to the object and our associated tendencies to respond in particular relevant ways. This view is shared by Vygotsky in ["Thought and Language"] in which he stresses that the crucial difference between the attitude of perception and of thinking is that the latter is a *generalized* attitude."[39] Mead taught his students that the mind was created by inner dialogue between the impulsive "I" and the reflexive "me." Pickering and Skinner point out that Vygotsky, Mead and Sigmund Freud were contemporaries, and all were deeply influenced by Charles Darwin's theory of evolution.

Mead was a major philosopher of American pragmatism, a philosophical movement that believed meaning and truth were functions of action rather than metaphysical ideas. Pragmatists hold that all principles must be regarded tentatively as hypotheses rather than as absolutely binding axioms. The ability to accept tentativeness, or pluralism, is a characteristic of pragmatism. In addition to Mead, the classical pragmatists include Charles Sanders Pierce, William James and Dewey.[40]

Pragmatism is a modern expression of empiricism, which holds that knowledge arises from sense experience rather than from innate knowledge, which includes mysticism, imagination, authority, tradition or purely theoretical reasoning. Enlightenment philosophers John Locke and David Hume and 19th Century philosopher John Stuart Mill

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38 Kenneth Bruffee, "Writing and Reading as Collaborative or Social Acts," *The Writer's Mind: Writing as a Mode of Thinking* (Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1983), 160-161.

39 John Pickering and Martin Skinner, *From Sentience to Symbols: Readings on Consciousness* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 240.

40 Sandra B. Rosenthal, "Pragmatism," *The New Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia* [CD-ROM] (Danbury, CT: Grolier Electronic Publishing, 1993).

were empiricists. They believed all people had the potential to acquire meaning and truth through their natural ability to apply reason to sensory experience.

Locke believed reason involved a process of mental reflection applied to sense perception. He divided ideas into primary sensations like shape, motion, weight and number, and secondary abstractions like taste and color.[41] Mill stressed that individual freedom — from social as well as government control — was necessary for reason to operate. Theories of the process of reason itself, however, were not developed further until the pragmatic movement of the 20th Century.

Theory and Research

In "Contemporary Composition: The Major Pedagogical Theories," James Berlin advances the idea that any composition theory must be consistent with related epistemology and linguistic theories. Based on this assumption, he has identified four current approaches to teaching writing: neo-Aristotelian or classicist, positivist or current-traditionalist, neo-Platonist or expressionist, and the new or epistemic rhetoric. Virtually all composition theories include Kinneavy's communication triangle, but Berlin's scheme is based on the way these elements are "defined and related so as to form a distinct world construct with distinct rules for discovering and communicating knowledge."[42]

Berlin believes the approach of the new epistemic rhetoricians is the most intelligent and most practical alternative available:

> I am also concerned, however, that writing teachers become more aware of the full significance of their pedagogical strategies. Not doing so can have disastrous consequences, ranging from momentarily confusing students to sending them away with faulty and even harmful information. The dismay students display about writing is, I am convinced, at least occasionally the result of teachers unconsciously offering contradictory advice about composing — guidance grounded in assumptions that

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41 Thomas K. Hearn, Jr., "John Locke." *The New Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia* [CD-ROM] (Danbury, CT: Grolier Electronic Publishing, 1993).

42 James A. Berlin, "Contemporary Composition: The Major Pedagogical Theories," in *The Writing Teacher's Sourcebook*, 3rd ed., ed. Gary Tate et al. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 10.

simply do not square with each other.[43]

The Aristotelian classicists believe the material world is knowable through sense impressions and deductive logic, and that there is a correlation between mind and reality. "Reality for Aristotle can be known and communicated, with language serving as the unproblematic medium of discourse."[44]

The positivists or current traditionalists represent the dominant model today, according to Berlin. In this model, the inductive logic of Locke replaces the deductive syllogism of Aristotle, and the aim of rhetoric is to teach students how to adapt speech to its hearers. In this model, the positive correspondence between mind and matter is emphasized and composition is divided according to physical arrangement and style: exposition, description, narration and oratory. Language study is divided accordingly into English composition, literature, speech and journalism, to name only a few.

The neo-Platonists or expressionists have roots in Plato, Emerson and Henry David Thoreau, according to Berlin. In this model, truth can be learned but not taught; the purpose of rhetoric is not to transmit truth but to prepare minds to discover truth; writing is the result of a private vision expressed in one's unique voice; dialectic is employed to discover what is unauthentic to the private vision of the writer; and metaphor is a prime feature of good writing.

Berlin claims the new epistemic rhetoric has roots in Dewey, Ann Berthoff, Linda Flower and Andrea Lunsford. It is based on principles of psychology and linguistics:

> Their approaches most comprehensively display a view of rhetoric as epistemic, as a means of arriving at truth, ... and knowledge is not simply a static entity available for retrieval. Truth is dynamic and dialectical, the result of a process involving the interaction of opposing elements. ... Language is at the center of this dialectical interplay between the individual and the world. ... For the New Rhetoric truth is impossible without language since it is language that embodies and generates truth. ... Language does not correspond to the 'real world.' It creates the 'real world' by organizing it, by determining what will be perceived and not perceived, by indicating what has meaning and what is meaningless. ... In the New Rhetoric the message arises out of the interaction of the writer, language, reality, and the audience. Truths are operative only within a given universe of discourse, and this universe is shaped by all

43 Ibid., 10.

44 Ibid., 11.

of these elements, including the audience.[45]

Berlin concludes that the new epistemic rhetoric rivals Aristotelian rhetoric in its comprehensiveness. Neo-Platonic, neo-Aristotelian, and epistemic rhetoric are reactions to the inadequacy of current-traditional positivistic rhetoric to teach students a notion of the composing process that will enable them "to become effective persons as they become effective writers."[46] Berlin's epistemic rhetoric is a model that squares with the social construction paradigm, and it is based on growing evidence that Vygotsky's inner speech, Mead's symbolic interaction and the semantic concepts of thought and language are different names for the same process of the mind.

In "Writer-Based Prose: A Cognitive Basis for Problems in Writing," Linda Flower explicates Vygotsky's research and relates it to composition theory. She focuses on inner speech as an instrument of problem solving, which she claims is the motivation for writing:

> According to Vygotsky, "the inner speech of the adult represents his 'thinking for himself' rather than social adaptation [communication to others]: i.e., it has the same function that egocentric speech has in the child" (Language and Thought, p.18). It helps him solve problems. Vygotsky found that when a child who is trying to draw encounters an obstacle (no pencils) or a problem (what shall I call it?), the incidence of egocentric speech can double.[47]

Flower's concept of "writer-based prose" is a particular application of Vygotsky's concept of inner speech. In moving from writing to revising, inner speech is transformed in an effort to meet the needs of the reader. To do this, the writer must assume the reader's point of view and ask, "Why am I reading this?" Flowers claims poor writing stems from the fact that "many people simply do not consider the reader when they write."[48]

Ann Berthoff's thesis in "Recognition, Representation, and Revision," makes clear she is a part of the new epistemic rhetoric/social construction paradigm: "We can learn to teach

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[45] Ibid., 17.

[46] Ibid., 19-20

[47] Linda Flower, "Writer-Based Prose: A Cognitive Basis for Problems in Writing," *College English* 41, no. 1 (September 1979): 26

[48] Ibid., 37

revision as itself a way of composing if we consider it analogous to acts of mind whereby we make sense of the world."[49] Berthoff refers to Freire's "pedagogy of knowing" and Vygotsky's inner dialogue:

> If a pedagogy of knowing is to be the successor to the pedagogy of exhortation, we will need as models of knowing those acts of mind which are logically and psychologically analogous to writing, namely, perception and concept formation. ... One procedure which helps writers enact revision as a mode of composing is what I call a dialectical notebook; notes, lists, statements, critical responses, queries of all sorts are written on one side; notes on these notes, responses to these responses are written on the facing page. The inner dialog which is thinking is thus represented as a dialectic, the beginning of thinking about thinking.[50]

In "Revision Strategies of Student Writers and Experienced Adult Writers," Nancy Sommers points out that linear communication models of the traditional paradigm are based on the spoken art of oratory, which can't be revised. A message begins to form with inner speech, then in meanings of words, and finally in words.[51] "What this movement fails to take into account in its linear structure — 'first ... then ... finally' — is the recursive shaping of thought by language; what it fails to take into account is *revision*.." She says linear models of writing produce "a parody of writing."[52]

Sommers studied the revision process of student writers and experienced writers over a three-year period to see what role revision played in the writing process. During the study, "the revision process was redefined as *a sequence of changes in a composition — changes which are initiated by cues and occur continually throughout the writing of a work.*"[53]

The case study included 20 freshmen at Boston University and the University of

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49 Ann E. Berthoff, "Recognition, Representation, and Revision," *Journal of Basic Writing* 3 (fall-winter 1981): 19.

50 Ibid., 22-24.

51 Nancy Sommers, "Revision Strategies of Student Writers and Experienced Adult Writers," *College Composition and Communication*, 31, (National Council of Teachers of English, 1980), 378.

52 Ibid., 379.

53 Ibid., 380.

Oklahoma with SAT verbal scores from 450 to 600 in their first semester of composition. The 20 experienced adult writers from Boston and Oklahoma City included journalists, editors and academics. She named these two groups "student writers" and "experienced writers." Each writer wrote three essays, expressive, explanatory and persuasive, and each writer rewrote each essay twice. Each writer was interviewed three times, and all these documents were analyzed according to a systematic coding system.

Most of the students Sommers studied did not use the term revision or rewriting: "Revision was not a word they used, but a word their teachers used." They instead used the following terms: scratch out and do over, reviewing, redoing, marking out, and scratching and throwing out.[54] Sommers concluded that the students she studied considered "cleaning by marking" — or elimination of redundancy — to stand for revision.

She noted their failure to see revision as a process of rereading their work with "different eyes, and to start over."[55] Their changes are made in compliance with abstract rules about the product, rules that often do not apply to the specific problems in the text from the reader's point of view. "These revision strategies are teacher-based, directed towards a teacher-reader who expects compliance with rules — with pre-existing 'conceptions' — and who will only examine parts of the composition."[56]

The experienced writers, on the other hand, used the following terms for transforming inner dialogue into readable text: rewriting and revising. They described the process as finding a framework, pattern or design for their compositions. One writer explained, "I have learned from experience that I need to keep writing a first draft until I figure out what I want to say."[57] They also expressed a concern for their readership. "The experienced

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[54] Ibid., 380-381

[55] Ibid., 382

[56] Ibid., 383

[57] Ibid., 384

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writers imagine a reader (reading their product) whose existence and whose expectations influence their revision process."[58] "They have abstracted the standards of a reader and this reader seems to be partially a reflection of themselves and functions as a critical and productive collaborator — a collaborator who has yet to love their work. ... Such a reader gives them just what the students lacked: new eyes to 're-view' their work."

Sommers concluded that the experienced writers saw revision as a process of *discovering meaning*. Citing Ferdinand de Saussure, who has argued that meaning is based more on differences between terms than on the inherent qualities of terms, Sommers claims the experienced writers recognize differences in their writing by reading their work through the eyes of another person. Although student writers struggle to bring their writing into congruence with predefined meaning, experienced writers seek to discover or create meaning in their engagement with their writing through revision and their understanding of the reader. She concludes that current revision dicta blind students to what is actually involved in revision.

Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford have contributed to the audience analysis approach to writing in particular and the social construction paradigm in general by critiquing an audience-response model of writing by Ruth Mitchell and Mary Taylor[59] and then proposing a new model for the concept of audience.[60] Mitchell and Taylor's model, which appears in Appendix A, focuses on a two-way interaction between writers and audiences. The writing process produces a written product which is read by the reader. The responding process produces feedback that is interpreted by the writer. While this model acknowledges the importance of audience in composition, Ede and Lunsford point out it

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58 Ibid., 385.

59 Ruth Mitchell and Mary Taylor, "The Integrating Perspective: An Audience-Response Model for Writing," *CE* 41 (November, 1979): 267.

60 Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford, "Audience Addressed/Audience Invoked: The Role of Audience in Composition Theory and Pedagogy," in *The Writing Teacher's Sourcebook*, 3d ed., ed. Gary Tate, Edward P.J. Corbett and Nancy Myers (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 243-257.

overlooks the inner dialog "through which writers analyze inventional problems and conceptualize patterns of discourse."[61]

They also point out that this model gives nearly equal weight to the audience, which raises ethical questions pertaining to ownership of — or responsibility for — the text. This is related to the claim of "pandering to the audience" made by critics of the civic journalism movement. By adding the concept of "audience invoked" internally by the writer to "audience addressed" externally by the writer, Ede and Lunsford give more responsibility to the writer while preserving the importance and influence of the audience.

Ede and Lunsford's graphic representation of their alternative model moves so far toward interaction with potential audience members, however, it suggests writers are influenced by virtually everyone in their past, present and imagined future audiences. (See Appendix A.) Their model does little to explicate their theory of audience analysis. They have overlooked the universal practical utility of the communication triangle in focusing attention on writer, reader and reality.

Bruner explains that the idea of social construction is not new — researchers were diverted about 30 years ago from Freud, Mead and Vygotsky by the technological success of the computer, which contributed to the attraction of using the computer as a model for the mind. "Emphasis began shifting from 'meaning' to 'information,' from the *construction* of meaning to the *processing* of information. These are profoundly different matters."[62]

Conclusions

Perhaps this paradigm shift is actually a shift back, a return of the pendulum swing; perhaps it is not new but a return to a way of viewing communication, meaning and knowledge as something people do together rather than something that is sent by writers and received by an audience. Perhaps the more accurate metaphor for making meaning —

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61 Ibid., 246.

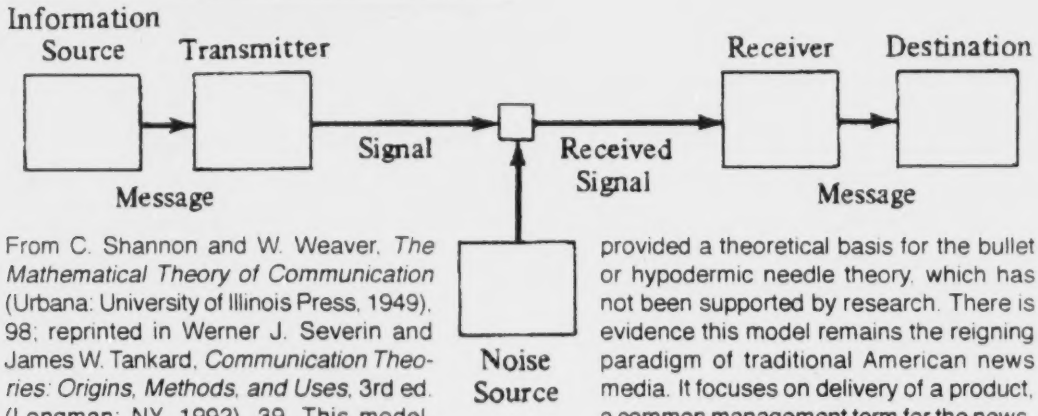
62 Bruner, 4

even in mass communication — is the town meeting or joint project rather than the computer sending and receiving data files or the transmitter emanating signals.

This research into the role of audience in constructing subjective meaning from objective texts suggest the following research questions: If there has been a paradigm shift in the meaning of knowledge, do professional news writers and their audiences agree on the nature of the shift? Do news writers and news consumers form similar or dissimilar groups concerning attitudes toward interactivity associated with constructivism? Reporters, editors, directors and webmasters would benefit greatly from more research in this area.

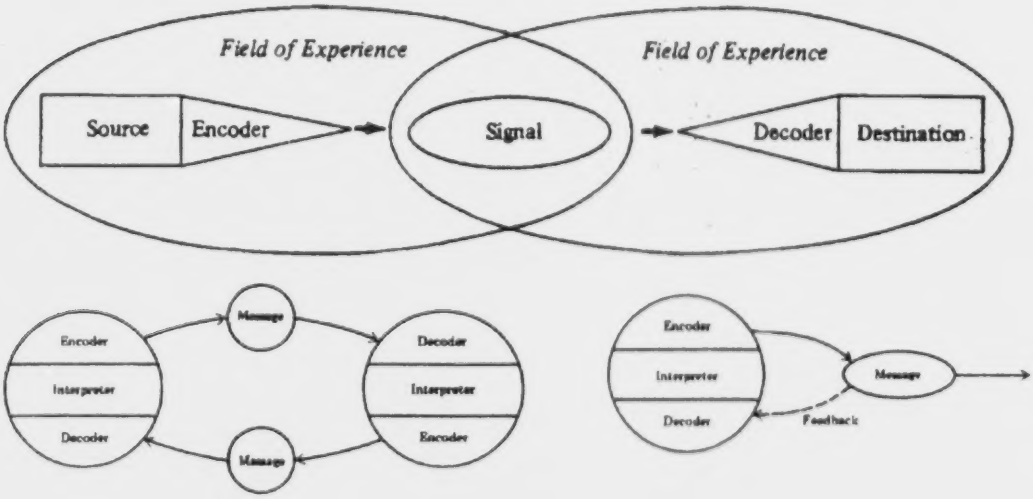
APPENDIX A: THE SHIFT FROM PRODUCT TO PROCESS

The Delivery or Product Paradigm (1949)



From C. Shannon and W. Weaver, *The Mathematical Theory of Communication* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1949), 98; reprinted in Werner J. Severin and James W. Tankard, *Communication Theories: Origins, Methods, and Uses*, 3rd ed. (Longman: NY, 1992), 39. This model, which treats information as a physical object rather than a psychological process, provided a theoretical basis for the bullet or hypodermic needle theory, which has not been supported by research. There is evidence this model remains the reigning paradigm of traditional American news media. It focuses on delivery of a product, a common management term for the news, and it uses terms that broadcasters commonly use to describe their equipment.

The Shared Signal Model (1954)



Wilbur Schramm, *The Process and Effects of Mass Communication* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1954); reprinted in C. David Mortensen, *Basic Readings in Communication Theory* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 31-35. The sender and receiver of a message must share common meanings for the signal to understand each other. They reach common meanings through two kinds of feedback: a message from the receiver to the sender and a message from the text to the sender. These types of feedback also are included the symbolic interaction model presented on Page 4.

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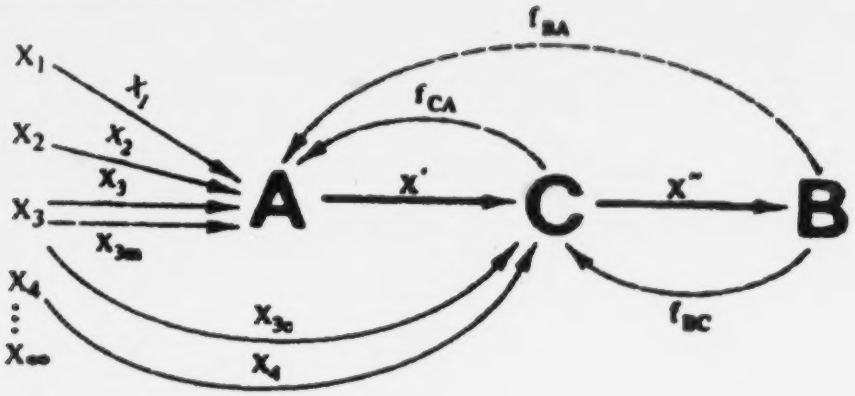
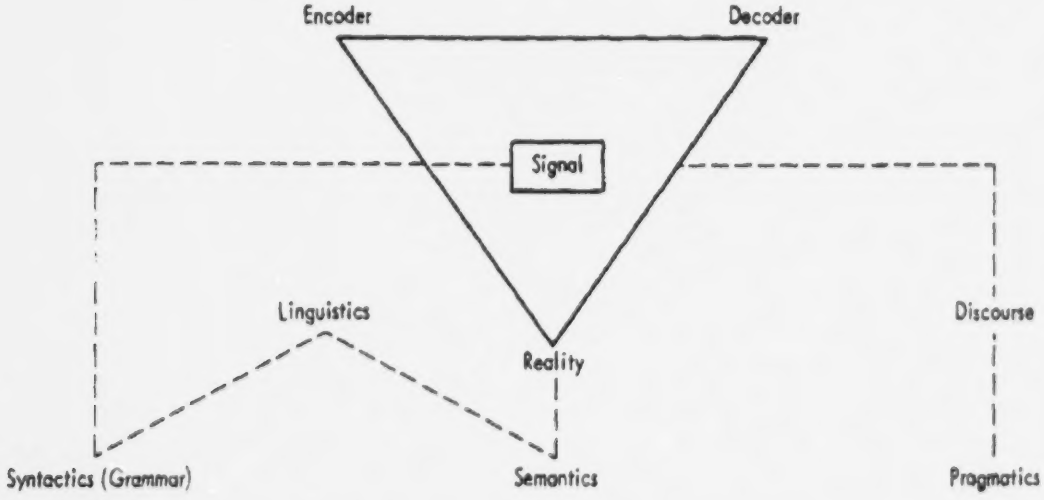
The ABCX Feedback Model (1957)



From Bruce H. Wesley and Malcomb S. MacLean, Jr., "A Conceptual Model for Communication Research," *Journalism Quarterly* 34 (1957): 31-38. According to this model, an active communicator, "A," purposely transmits a message to a behavioral receiver, "B," through an editor or a media channel, "C." The message is affected by objects and events "out there," denoted as Xs, and by feedback from Bs, denoted by Fs. The model provokes important scrutiny of the role of Cs in communication, which underlies the gatekeeping hypothesis, but it precludes first-hand knowledge of Xs or second-hand knowledge of Xs from other sources for B.

The Communication Triangle Model (1971)



From James Kinneavy, *A Theory of Discourse* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1971), 25: "Basic to all uses of language are a person, who encodes a message, the signal (language) which carries the message, the reality to which the message refers, and the decoder (receiver of the message)." According to this model, linguistics is the study of the signal and its relationship to reality while discourse is the process of communication that connects writers, readers and the world of objects and actions.

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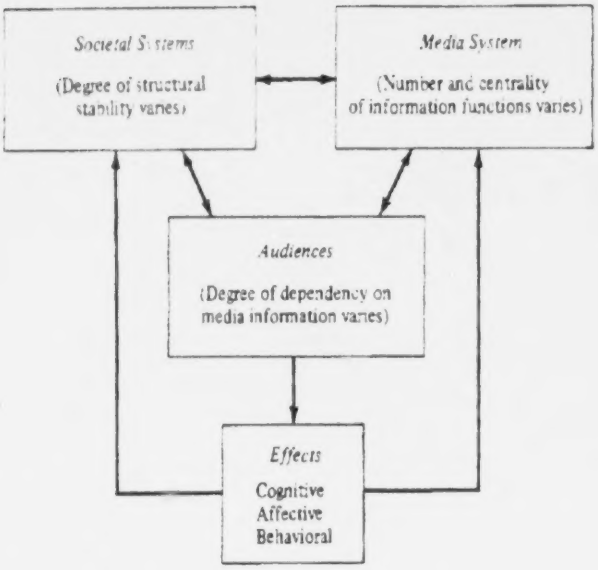
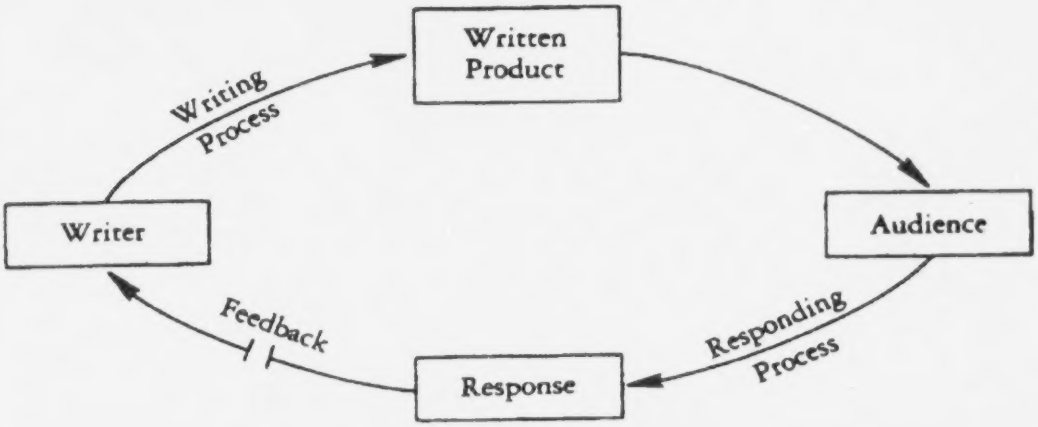
The Media Dependency Model (1976)



From S.J. Ball-Rokeach and M.L. DeFleur, "A Dependency Model of Mass-Media Effects," *Communication Research* 3 (1976): 8; reprinted in *DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach, Communication Theories*, 263. The dependency or process paradigm owes much to several media effects theories, including conflict, structural-functional and symbolic interaction. It illustrates how research can indicate strong effects in some cases and weak effects in others. In dependency theory, the strength of the effect depends on the outcome of interactions between people involved in the communication process. Dependency theory can be applied at the micro level (reporter-reader-event) or macro level (media system-audiences-societal systems). This process model makes interaction the focus of effective communication.

The Audience Response Model (1979)



Ruth Mitchell and Mary Taylor, "The Integrating Perspective: An Audience-Reponse Model for Writing," *College English*, 41 (November, 1979), 250; reprinted in Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford, "Audience Addressed/Audience Invoked: The Role of Audience in Composition Theory and Pedagogy," Gary Tate, Edward Corbett and Nancy Myers, ed., *The Writing Teacher's Sourcebook*, 3d ed., (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 246. This is a practical model, but Ede and Ludsford point out that it does not account for the writer's imagined or "invoked" audience during the writing process. This is another reference to the social psychology of symbolic interaction, presented on Page 4.

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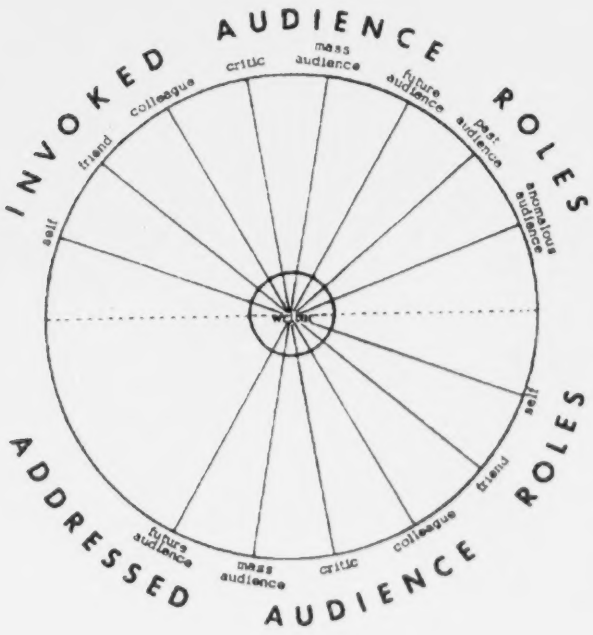
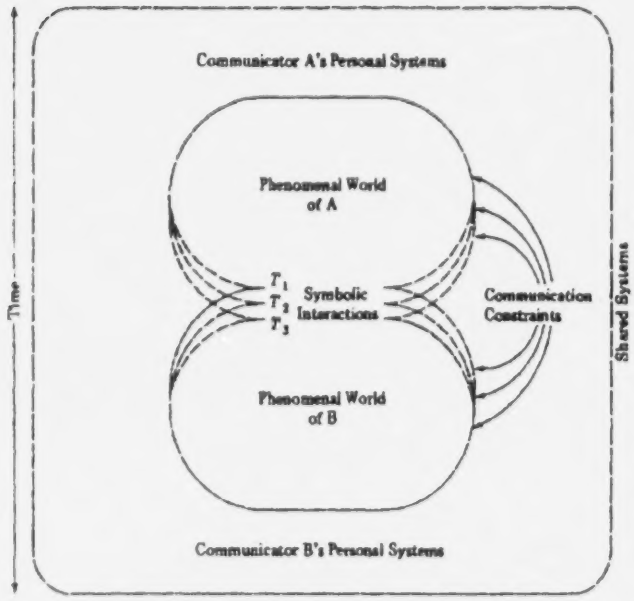
The Invoked Audience Model (1984)



From Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford "Audience Addressed/Audience Invoked: The Role of Audience in Composition Theory and Pedagogy." *College Composition and Communication* 35 (May 1984): 155-71 reprinted in *The Writing Teacher's Sourcebook*, 3d ed., ed. Gary Tate Edward P.J. Corbett and Nancy Myers (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 254. This model shows how interaction with audiences does not place the audience on an equal footing with the writer of a text. The writer uses his or her own ideas, including the conception of his or her audience, to create a text. The audience does not literally write any part of the text. This places responsibility for the text squarely on the shoulder of the writer. This model shows how including the concept of audience in the writing process is not necessarily pandering to the audience, as critics of writer-audience interaction have claimed.

The Interaction or Process Paradigm (1992)



From Julia T. Wood, *Spinning the Symbolic Web: Human Communication and Symbolic Interaction* (Norwood, N.J: Ablex Publishing Corporation, 1992), 26. Natural constraints prevent minds from interacting directly. Symbolic interactions are sign systems developed to overcome these constraints. By creating external signs and interanlly gauging reactions from others, the mind constructs symbolic internal knowledge about "personal systems" of others. Language represents the most elaborate and commonly used sign system. Symbolic interaction is compatible with empiricism, the theory that knowledge is created through sensory experience, and constructionism, the theory that knowledge is constructed through interactions between members of communities.

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Civic Journalism

Media Coverage of Sports and Politics: An Examination of the Press' Role in Campaigns for Professional Sports Stadium Construction

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New Orleans, LA
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Abstract:

In recent years, a new "Super Bowl" has emerged for sports franchise owners, with the construction of a taxpayer subsidized stadium as the ultimate prize. This paper argues that civic journalism might offer a better coverage strategy than the traditional reporting methods when reporting on political attempts to publicly fund sports stadia. In many regards, the stakes of the stadium finance game are much more significant for the typical citizen and sports fan since the result has been franchise relocations and/or new taxes in order to subsidize stadium construction for professional sports franchises. The rules of this game are predicated on high stakes financial decisions, with carefully crafted media campaigns often aimed at mobilizing public opinion to build new sports facilities as a means of community revitalization. Opposition voices are generally unorganized and, not surprisingly, tend to receive less media coverage. This effort looks at media coverage of Pittsburgh's push for stadium funding which was defeated by voters in 1997, but later approved by state legislators in February 1999 when Pennsylvania became the first state to simultaneously approve funding for construction of four new sports facilities. This paper examines how various media were utilized to articulate the various issues surrounding the proposed construction of new sports facilities in Pittsburgh from July 1997 through March 1999. In this case study, traditional media coverage tends to minimize public involvement and privilege elite voices that favor new construction initiatives. Because of high levels of public concern about sports-related issues, it is recommended that civic journalism be employed in communities where public subsidy of a stadium is being considered. Arguments that civic journalism promotes "booster" journalism are countered with assertions that traditional methods of reporting inspire a form of passive boosterism that leaves the ordinary citizen mistrustful of the press and political leadership.

In an address to the Aspen Institute on June 27, 1997 Edward M. Fouhy, founder of the Pew Center for Civic Journalism, suggested that sports and entertainment pose formidable obstacles to citizen involvement in political issues. In his reflections on his role in network coverage of the 1988 Presidential election, he pointedly stated that "I had, through bitter experience, learned that when a news event is up against an entertainment or sports event on television, the news event loses." Despite the general credibility of this assertion, Fouhy indicated that political issues have beaten out significant sports events in some instances.

As Fouhy was delivering these remarks in Aspen, CO, an intense political campaign was taking shape in western Pennsylvania that combined sports and politics. For many citizens in this community the stadium funding referendum was the most important news event of the year. The high level of public engagement in this issue suggests that journalists have an opportunity to utilize the cultural significance of sports to involve citizens in the democratic process in a unique way. Careful examination of the stadium issue may provide media practitioners with fertile terrain for application of civic journalism on both a local and national level. Civic journalism has been criticized on a variety of fronts, including recent articles in such prestigious publications as the *New York Times, Wall Street Journal, and the Washington Post* (Schaeffer 1997a). Examination of the stadium issue and careful scrutiny of traditional reporting methods employed in one campaign to publicly fund stadium construction can serve to determine whether civic journalism might offer a better strategy for media coverage of the issue.

Civic Journalism- Developing a Theoretical Framework:

Some advocates of civic journalism (also referred to as "public journalism") are reluctant to detail the specific qualities that differentiate it from traditional journalism. A somewhat common strategy is to explain some rather basic goals of civic journalism, such as greater inclusion and involvement of a wider public in democratic discourse, following these defined goals with examples of real-world implementation by practitioners (see Schaeffer 1997). Critical

salvos from mainstream media sources make this reticent posture understandable. In addition, practitioners and scholars are also wisely reluctant to establish an overly formulaic definition of civic journalism because such a move could diminish the effectiveness of civic journalism in a variety of ways. In one cogent example, journalism students and inexperienced reporters might be inclined to follow an established "formula" in a rigid manner that might diminish the overall quality of reporting. As with almost all methods of reporting, blind adherence to a pre-determined formula can often result in a product that fails to serve the public interest and/or capture the attention of the audience. Nevertheless, without a firm attempt to isolate the qualities and characteristics that make civic journalism unique from traditional journalism, the ability to offer this option to both seasoned veterans and inexperienced reporters is hampered.

Civic journalism draws its theoretical underpinnings from John Dewey and Jurgen Habermas. Dewey's philosophy centers on active education and public participation in democratic institutions. He perceived education as necessary to preserve democracy and saw the press as an important part of this educational process. Unlike his philosophic opponent, Walter Lippmann, who called for technocratic control of media and political institutions, Dewey placed faith in the average citizen to actively participate in the democratic process. Nevertheless, like many scholars of his era, he was concerned that the dramatic shift from an agrarian to an urban society in the late 19th century presented formidable obstacles to active democratic participation. Henry Perkinson aptly chronicles this concern in writing that "without community, [Dewey believed] the bigness of the city, its variety, and its toleration shattered the individual, leaving him undisciplined, dislocated, and alienated" (p. 83). Dewey's worries that democracy faced many obstacles in an increasingly urban society caused him to argue that media institutions were critical to the future of America because "The great society created by steam and electricity may be a society, but it is no community....Communication alone can make a great community" (Dewey pp. 98-142).

Jurgen Habermas' idealistic concept of a "public sphere," a site for "impartial public discourse...in which citizens and factions have equal access," provides a secondary philosophic underpinning for civic journalism (Lambeth p.20). Habermas defines "the public sphere" as the "realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed..., [further emphasizing that] today newspapers, magazines, radio, and television are the medium of the public sphere" (Habermas p. 198). Habermasian calls for a wider level of discourse may seem idealistic, hence futile. But the track record of new information technologies and the economic "marketplace" as curatives for difficult political matters suggests that a more inclusive public dialogue may better serve society when grappling with difficult and important policy issues.

Davis Merritt and Jay Rosen are the earliest advocates of the civic journalism model. Reflecting the thought of Dewey, Habermas and James Carey, Merritt argues that "changing the culture of journalism will require the best and most earnest efforts of journalists, academics, philosophers, conscientious citizens- everyone who cares about the future of society" (Merritt and Rosen, p. 46). Ironically, within this framework, civic journalism's staunchest critics are contributing to the dialogue that is necessary to establish civic journalism's credibility. Merritt outlines several elements that differentiate public journalism from traditional top-down reporting methods that attempt to achieve a near-objective detachment from the subject under scrutiny. According to Merritt, reporters would be wise to acknowledge that:

> 1) The viability of public life and the value of journalism are inextricably bound together. 2) Public life cannot regain its vitality on a diet of information alone, for there's far too much of it for even the most well-intentioned citizens to digest. If journalists view their job as simply providing information- simply telling news in a detached way- they will not be particularly helpful to public life or to their profession. 3) The objective of journalism should be to reengage citizens in public life. To make that shift, we must take two steps:

> add to the definition of our job the additional objective of helping public life go well, and then develop the journalistic tools and reflexes necessary to meet those objectives (Merritt and Rosen, p. 44).

Rosen advises that reporters need to move beyond the limitations of "horse race" elections and consultant inspired press releases, stating that practitioners "must become 'activists' and take the campaign momentum away from the hired guns who profit from the disillusionment they help create" (Merritt and Rosen, p. 53). Journalism of this nature requires a clear commitment of resources and leadership in order to succeed. Civic journalism is controversial, in part because of the entrenchment of special interests, the uneasy feeling that some leaders have about more liberal distribution of mobilizing information, and the comfort level of many practitioners with traditional reporting methods.

While many recent converts to civic journalism might regard it as a "new" model, it borrows many qualities from the community journalism model that has been practiced in small community newspapers throughout the nation for decades. It is no accident that the civic journalism model emanated from Davis Merritt's efforts at the *Wichita Eagle* rather than an editor at larger metropolitan publications such as the *New York Times* or the *Washington Post.* Jock Lauterer, a leader in the teaching and practice of community journalism, describes the close link between the community journalist and the audience as "one of our greatest strengths [because] it reinforces the human scale, serves as a reality check for personal values, as well as responsible and fair news judgement, while encouraging professional accountability" (Lauterer, p.16).

Just as community journalists are active participants in their community, civic journalists are called upon to actively and accurately seek out voices that reflect the richness and diversity of democratic dialogue on a range of issues. Instead of traditional top-down reporting, civic journalists attempt to capture a wider array of voices in a way that is reflective of community

values. Such reporting may make democracy a more difficult process for selected elites, but if done properly, it will offer the public a greater sense of citizen empowerment and, quite possibly, a greater range of policy options. Civic journalism is not an attempt to pander to diversity as a tool for boosting circulation; rather, it is an attempt to actively involve citizens in the democratic process so that public participation in important community issues results in prudent and well designed policy decisions that are consistent with community values. A byproduct of effective civic journalism should be increased voter efficacy and greater citizen involvement in shaping future public policy initiatives. Recent research has also established linkages between higher levels of public confidence in media outlets utilizing this strategy as well as increased voter turnout (Fouhy and Schaeffer 1995).

Why Consider the Stadium Issue for New Media Strategies?

That sports stadia are an important part of American culture comes as no surprise to many. In 1976 James Michener argued that America had moved from the "Age of the Skyscraper" to "an Age of the Stadium" in part because "we live in an age when cities are compressing much of their creative instincts into stadiums" (p. 338-339). Interestingly, the stadium boom that Michener spoke of in the 1970s pales in comparison to the intensity of stadium construction in the 1990s. Public funding of stadia was quite common in the 1970s, but in the 1990s it has become increasingly common and the overall level of subsidy is much more profound. In today's era of public sports subsidy, construction of the New Orleans Superdome, regarded in the 1980s and early 1990s as a lavish and ostentatious public expenditure, is no longer considered excessive. According to sports economists, the Superdome, built at an approximate cost of over $450 million in present-day dollars, would simply "fit nicely in the upper range of [today's] standard experience" (Noll and Zimbalist, p. 5).

Proponents of public stadium financing have argued that these subsidies spur economic growth while giving the community a renewed sense of civic pride. Opponents argue that this is

welfare in reverse, an incredible subsidy that is afforded to only the most affluent members of the community. Opponents also argue that the economic gains are vastly overstated pointing to methodological flaws in typical pro-stadium economic analysis (Rosentraub 1997).

Economic impact statements related to stadium construction tend to take the shape of carefully crafted political documents. The gulf between economic documents prepared by stadium proponents and those prepared by independent scholars is often very wide, leaving the public confused and uncertain about the real-world impact of stadium construction on a community. At the same time, scholars have observed that the balance of power in sports-related negotiations has profoundly shifted from communities to sports franchise owners (Danielson 1997). In such a setting, the role of media coverage is increasingly important in shaping the public's knowledge and awareness of this issue.

Several critical cultural scholars have looked at sports as an equalizing force in society. John Fiske, for example, argues that "sports always exposes the limits of officialdom to control both it and the way it is known" (1993, p.88). The public financing of sports stadia has demonstrated the hollowness of this claim. At a time when street-level welfare is under political assault on a variety of fronts, one national author argues that "giving welfare to team owners is the newest civic sport" (McCormick 1997, p. 55). Among the recent recipients of these stadium subsidies is Seattle Seahawk owner Paul Allen, co-founder of Microsoft Corporation and the world's eighth richest man. A number of cities, including New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago are currently debating options for stadium construction, so the issue is still highly relevant to much of America.

Has the press served as a responsible watchdog, fully examining the various issues related to the stadium subsidy debate, or is the press simply a conduit of elite interests of which big-time sports is firmly entrenched? This paper attempts to examine the stadium subsidy issue as it relates to public participation in the political process, a hallmark of civic journalism.

Examination of the failed 1997 Pittsburgh Regional Renaissance Initiative and the subsequent legislative approval of funding for two new major league stadiums after this failed public referendum will serve to focus this effort. Examination of reporting strategies in TV and newspaper coverage from June 1997 through March 1999 will lead to an analysis of whether the public could be better served through employment of civic journalism strategies.

Although recent national media coverage has focused more intensely on New England Patriots owner Robert Kraft's recent decision to keep his team in Massachusetts after consideration of a $375 million subsidy to move to Hartford, CT, the Pittsburgh case study is highly significant as a reflection of national trends in escalation of stadium subsidies. Less than three years after Howard County, OH became the first community to agree to simultaneously fund construction of two brand new stadia in Cincinnati, legislators in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania decided to approve funding for four new stadium projects despite considerable public opposition. While smaller in dollar terms than the Hartford deal, it marks the first time in history that state-level approval of funding for four stadium projects has occurred.

Because the stadium subsidy issue has not garnered a great deal of national coverage, the typical citizen's primary exposure to this topic is through local media sources. Nevertheless, the implications of the stadium issue are national, giving this issue the clear potential to demonstrate the strength of civic journalism on both local and national levels.

Stadium construction issues have escaped the scrutiny of serious communication scholarship despite the reality that such issues are of broad concern to the general populous. In fact, the stadium issue has the potential to overshadow all other issues in many communities. Days before the Pittsburgh metropolitan area's regional referendum to subsidize stadium funding, the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette's* editorial staff indicated that this issue attracted more public attention and active response than any other issue "in living memory" (Editor's Note 1997). Consistently high levels of voter turnout for stadium referenda provide compelling evidence that

the stadium funding issue resonates with the voters of major metropolitan areas. In one example, the voter turnout for the Arlington, TX referendum to raise local sales tax was the largest in the city's history (Rosentraub 1997, p. 436).

Although citizens are generally opposed to subsidizing major league franchise owners, recent examples of franchise movement have forced communities to consider the consequences of franchise departure if owner demands are not met by public subsidy. The monopoly status of professional sports leagues offers considerable bargaining leverage for owners seeking these subsidies (Danielson 1997). The recent tendency of these franchises to move when faced with multi-million dollar enticements from other communities has provided a powerful and compelling rationale for citizen acceptance of higher stadium subsidy levels than would be tolerable under more stable conditions. Billionaire financier George Soros has aptly commented that under current economic conditions financial capital "is free to go where it is best rewarded" (Soros 1998, p.78), but in sports where professional franchises are limited, city officials are increasingly inclined to extend more generous subsidies to sports owners than would be reasonable under normal market circumstances. A community might be able to attract similar types of new investment after the departure of a manufacturer or retailer, but once a sports franchise leaves a city, replacement with a minor league alternative is a hollow substitute in the eyes of many citizens. "Major league" teams bring abundant national media exposure and enormous civic pride, things that are often left unevaluated when economic analysis of this topic is provided.

Media practitioners have offered some insight on the stadium financing issue. Ironically, these efforts do not tend to analyze media coverage tendencies related to the issue in a detailed or significant way. In a recent example, journalists Cagan and deMause suggest that media coverage has caused "fewer people now to take seriously the arguments that funding sports stadiums is good business for city governments" (1998, p.199). Of currently available materials,

one significant effort to focus on media dimension of the stadium funding issue is offered by Mark Rosentraub whose scholarship is more directly aimed at economic analysis and the role of urban planning in economic development. Rosentraub's highly critical view of stadium financing suggests that media coverage is less likely to challenge new stadium financing because the loss of a major league franchise by a community would also mean a loss in revenue for newspapers and television stations covering professional sports stories. He cites record-breaking newspaper circulation numbers for issues that coincide with significant playoff coverage involving the local team. This potential self-interest suggests that mass media can't be relied on to provide balanced and accurate coverage of stadium-related issues. Rosentraub concludes that this profit-oriented dynamic undermines the potential for political leaders to negotiate a fair and reasonable stadium deal with major league owners. In these negotiations, he argues the press will be "unlikely to critically report or investigate the negative implications or aspects of any partnership that brings a team to a community, [likely to] provide substantial coverage, or benefits from, a team's positive impacts in the community and [likely to] provide substantial coverage of any lost opportunities...that surround the movement of a team" from one city to another (pp. 54-55). He argues that these biases in press coverage cause politicians to avoid criticism of stadium funding excesses, while some "might be very receptive to supporting sports issues if it means favorable coverage in the media" (P. 55).

Considerably greater scrutiny is needed to determine whether these media coverage tendencies are both reasonable and valid. If these claims are valid, alternative reporting strategies including civic journalism should be considered so that coverage of this issue reflects the diversity of the community that is served in this news coverage. The direction of media coverage in this area has dramatic implications for public policy and citizens' political efficacy levels since it is one of the few issues that resonates with the heartfelt interests of a broad segment of the community.

The stadium game- media, money and major league image, an overview:

When the Broncos and Falcons faced each other in Super Bowl XXXIII, the total gross revenues for television broadcasting the event were approximately $150 million (Numbers 1999). The Super Bowl is clearly the most watched sporting event in America, but the revenues achieved through this Super Bowl broadcast pale in comparison to the revenues sought by several professional sports franchise owners for stadium construction in recent years. A 1996 report indicated that "$7 billion has been spent over the past three years to build or renovate 30 major sports facilities in America," an average of over $230 million per facility (McGraw 1996). *Stadium and Arena News*, a specialized financial publication that has emerged as a result of this recent construction boom, describes the stadium and arena venue as "a $6 billion industry." Professional franchise owners have put up some of the funds for this construction, but in recent years, taxpayers have taken on an increasing burden of skyrocketing stadium construction costs.

In 1995, a $60 million public commitment to renovate the San Diego Charger's facility helped to pave the way for its role as host of the 1998 Super Bowl (Acello 1995). In today's economic environment, a $60 million dollar renovation would be regarded by many owners as seed money for minor cosmetic improvements. Furthermore, it is possible that the NFL would consider such an expenditure inadequate for a city proposing to host a future Super Bowl. For many sports franchise owners, construction of a new stadium has become the real "Super Bowl."

The structural integrity of most older stadia are sound, but these huge structures have become financially "obsolete." A look at skybox revenues, which are not shared among owners, helps to explain why. In 1994 Dallas Cowboys Owner Jerry Jones was able to extract over $37 million in stadium revenues by adding 68 luxury suites and through other stadium-related marketing strategies. The result was more than double the stadium revenue of any other NFL franchise in that year and a 25% increase in the value of the team (Ozanian 1995). Jones clearly set a standard that other NFL owners now look to as they devise independent strategies to

manage their respective franchises. The Cleveland Browns, a newly minted NFL franchise, has yet to play a single down, but they have crafted a stadium package that will yield a whopping $49 million in annual revenues (Ozanian 1998, p.124). Despite considerable taxpayer subsidies, owners retain these revenues.

In a sense, the rules of professional sports management have shifted the game from the field of play to the field of high finance. As a result, it is not uncommon for Major League Baseball and National Football League franchises to contribute significant amounts of funding to organizations that attempt to shape public opinion on this issue. Brookings Institution President Michael Armacost indicates that the funding discrepancy between stadium advocates and stadium critics is typically "more than twenty to one" in election campaigns (1997, viii). Since most of this money is aimed at media-related expenditures, pro-stadium forces have a decided edge in media access unless news coverage vigilantly pushes to maintain balance. Such balance is hard to achieve however, since opposition tends to be dispersed among the general populous, while stadium proponents are generally cohesive and easily organized by self-interest.

The stadium construction issue has polarized sports fans unlike any other issue. Claims that new sports facilities can rejuvenate the economic condition of large cities are often vastly exaggerated. Feasibility studies and impact reports often contain flawed assumptions that overestimate the long term benefits of stadium construction to the economic vitality of a community. Nevertheless, scholars often underestimate the potential for stadium construction to lift the collective spirit of a metropolitan area that has recently acquired a professional sports franchise and the collective shock experienced by a city victimized by a sudden franchise shift. From an economic standpoint, one might argue that Cleveland's expenditure of approximately $231,000 per job in the Gateway Project was a poor investment in the city's infrastructure (Austrian and Rosentraub 1997). But the project contributed to a lifting of community pride, and it reversed the decline of a blighted inner city neighborhood. The economics of the Cleveland

construction may have been questionable, but the emotional lift experienced by Cleveland's citizens was immeasurable, helping to offset some of the sting that resulted when Art Model moved his NFL franchise from Cleveland to Baltimore after the 1995 season.

The new "free agency" in sports, spurred by Al Davis' court victory against the NFL in 1984 (Los Angeles 1984), has profoundly changed the ground rules for stadium construction in major metropolitan areas across the country. Davis' court challenge permitted him to move from Oakland to Los Angles, opening the floodgates for franchise free agency in sports. He knew the consequences of this were significant. In a 1985 NFL owners' meeting, Davis argued that "because of his [Davis'] move, franchises' leverage in the superstadium game had made a quantum leap, and that [transgression from a traditionally cohesive NFL policy] made everyone more money than they could have otherwise hoped for" (Harris 1986, p. 639). The departure of the Browns from Cleveland after years of sellout crowds and an intensely loyal fan following hammered home how dramatically these ground rules had changed in recent years for cities with professional sports teams. Before the Al Davis' shifting of his Raiders franchise, the NFL was a paragon of unity and stability when compared to other sports entities. That has since ended.

Randy Roberts and James Olsen (1989) trace much of this cooperative management style to the immigrant, Roman Catholic heritage that was part of the cultural upbringing of early NFL owners such as George Halas, Tim Mara, Art Rooney, and George Marshall. In this early setting, franchise shifts seldom occurred, so owners were less likely to make stadium requirements and potential franchise movement a critical concern. Once expansion resulted in a more diverse ownership profile, it was only a matter of time before individualism resulted in challenging the league's cooperative management structure. Bottom-line economics, including limited broadcast revenues, also impacted on geographic stability of the NFL in the early years. Prior to 1960, the NFL was much less prestigious and much less able to dictate key economic decisions since its audience was primarily blue-collar, instead of today's demographic mix of a more upscale

clientele. In its early years, the NFL often played second-fiddle to Major League Baseball and even big-time college football. Television contracts were so insignificant, that through part of the 1950s, NFL games were carried on the now defunct DuMont Television Network. In the early 1970s former CBS Sports Chief Bill MacPhail openly admitted that, although the NFL was currently perceived to be a better package by leading broadcast executives, during the 1950s he "would have preferred the network to have college football" (Johnson 1971, p.119).

The NFL's policy of revenue sharing of television income and gate receipts worked to create parity, allowing small market teams such as Green Bay to compete with New York and Chicago, but in recent times a new breed of owners, seeking individual rather than collective success, have looked to concession sales, parking fees, and skybox revenues as well as other avenues for profits in order to gain an edge over competing franchise owners. Major League Baseball's heavy reliance on local broadcast revenues has served to maintain a high level of individualism amongst team owners, making the geographic stability of franchises less than certain. Despite this, baseball owners have been less inclined to succumb to franchise free agency in recent decades, but they continue to use the threat of movement as an effective method of obtaining new stadium financing. The bargaining strength of the Major League Baseball Players' Association has been a more decisive factor in the ownership push for higher revenues.

Federal attempts to regulate this franchise movement has done little to change the current construction landscape. Hearings by the House Judiciary Subcommittee on February 6, 1996 shed much light on the issue, but led to no change in federal policy on franchise relocation. (Professional Sports 1996). A May 1999 proposal by Pennsylvania Senator Arlen Spector to hold leagues accountable for a larger portion of stadium construction costs appears to have little chance of passage. Despite this, the threat of potential legislation may have coaxed some NFL officials into a more cooperative stance regarding provision of loans to fellow owners for new construction costs. More important, however, in this cooperative financing plan is team owner concern that

broadcast revenues may be diminished over the long run if franchises continue to abandon markets such as Los Angeles, Houston, or Boston for smaller markets such as St. Louis, Nashville, or Hartford.

The Pittsburgh case study- the direction and focus of traditional media coverage:

From a demographic and economic standpoint, Pittsburgh falls within that insecure category described by Euchener as a city in danger of losing its sports franchises. A 1995 *Financial World* study of team sports values ranked the Steelers in the bottom four for overall franchise worth and only seven NFL teams reported less stadium revenue for the 1994 season (Ozanian 1995, p.50). A more recent analysis of franchise value anticipated the Steelers new stadium revenues, elevating the value of the Steelers to thirteenth out of thirty teams (Ozanian 1998, p. 132). Their joint tenants at Three Rivers Stadium, the Pirates, were ranked dead last in franchise value in 1994, with stadium revenues reported at the lowest level for any team in Major League Baseball (Ozanian 1995, p.47). By December 1998 efforts to eliminate high-priced player contracts and the likelihood of new stadium construction elevated the value of the Pirates to twenty second out of twenty eight major league teams (Ozanian 1998, p. 126). Without a new stadium, however, the Pirates faced sale to out of town interests. These market realities served to keep the stadium issue alive in Pittsburgh even after the failed referendum vote on the Regional Renaissance Initiative in November 1997. Pittsburgh is not the first metropolitan area to say no to its local sports franchises in a referendum vote, but until formal approval of state and county subsidies for new stadium construction in February 1999, it was a city in greater danger of losing a sports franchise than many other communities who have rejected similar stadium initiatives.

The Pittsburgh case provides interesting parallels to larger national trends. In 1991, as Baltimore was gaining some level of notoriety for construction of an innovative new ballpark for the Orioles, Pittsburgh Mayor Sophie Masloff proposed building a baseball only facility at a cost of $130 million dollars. After overwhelming public and political criticism of the plan, it was

quickly dropped. Over the next five years, the Pirates and the city struggled to resolve both ownership and stadium issues. As a "small market" team, the Pirates fought hard to retain profitability, making the push for a new stadium a high priority as Kevin McClatchy took over ownership of the club in 1996. Without new ownership, the franchise was in clear danger of moving out of the Pittsburgh market. In order for the change in ownership to be accepted, however, Pittsburgh officials, led by Mayor Tom Murphy, promised to move forward on stadium construction, offering a five year timetable for completion. In 1997, city and county officials crafted a plan they called the "Regional Renaissance Initiative" which would bring matching state tax dollars to the city if a half-cent sales tax was approved in a referendum by the voters. Prior to the crafting of this document, the Steelers football franchise demanded inclusion in the project after conducting a feasibility study that indicated a full renovation of Three Rivers Stadium would cost almost as much as construction of a new football-only facility. To make the referendum more attractive to non-sports voters, a host of other projects were added, including major expansion of the city's convention center and new monies for art and cultural programs. Following an intense public debate, the Regional Renaissance Initiative failed miserably at the polls.

In the months following this rejection, political leaders and sports franchise owners worked behind the scenes to craft what became known as "Plan B." These leaders generally argued that the referendum was not a rejection of stadium funding, but a rejection of using new taxes to fund stadiums. These leaders crafted legislation that would tap into existing revenue streams, while efforts were made to cut back on funding of projects that were already benefited from these existing taxes. Specifically, arts and cultural organizations were cautioned that projects might face cutbacks (Gutnick 1998). According to the formula decided by leaders, the construction of two new stadia would result from three funding sources. A third would come from the county's Regional Asset District Board, which was already financing Three Rivers Stadium's debt. Another third would come from team owners, and a final portion would come from a state

match that was promised earlier by Pennsylvania Governor Tom Ridge. After political maneuvering that included the resignation of an anti-funding board member in the summer of 1998, the Regional Asset District Board agreed to a formula that would provide the county's third of the stadium funding. Prior to this vote, owners of the Steelers and Pirates agreed to provide $76.5 and $40 million in funding for the projects but were granted a variety of concessions, such as stadium naming rights, that would limit their personal contributions to the project. On August 6, less than two months after the Pirates agreed to a $40 million commitment, PNC Bank announced that they would retain naming rights for a twenty year period, reducing the Pirates personal commitment to the ballpark to $10 million dollars (Barnes 1998).

As this announcement was being made, state-level legislators and lobbyists were working in Harrisburg to craft a formula that would bring the state's one-third share to the table. Philadelphia-area votes were needed, so delays occurred as Philadelphia legislators worked with their sports franchise owners to craft a package that would include their participation. Legislators outside of Pittsburgh and Philadelphia were reluctant to support the stadium projects and some, sensing desperation, opportunistically would not support the bill without funding of key projects in their area. By January 1999, passage was uncertain. To provide the final push needed, Governor Ridge proposed expanding the funding to include $320 million for stadia and $330 million for other state projects. The expansion was not quite enough to assure passage, forcing pro-stadium legislators back to the drawing board. A final plan was offered that would, in theory, protect the taxpayers from expenditures that would not contribute to increased tax revenues for the state. According to the agreement, state funding for stadium construction would be granted, but sports franchise owners would be audited at ten year intervals to determine whether increases in tax revenues were sufficient to offset the state level of funding. The audit would not take inflation into consideration. The measure was signed by the Governor on February 9, 1999.

Despite a close vote the legislation was an attractive way to explain to taxpayers that

owners would be accountable for bringing new tax revenues into the state coffers, while offering major funding for projects to those outside of Pennsylvania's two largest cities. The legislation virtually assured that four new stadia would be constructed over the next four years. Media coverage tended to hail the agreement as unique and unprecedented, and in light of Connecticut's announced desire to finance a $375 million stadium to attract a single franchise to Hartford, the agreement was less onerous than many recent stadium deals. As a media case-study, this is particularly interesting as an examination of existing media routines because what started out as a case in direct democracy evolved into a case where many citizens were passive observers in a process that limited their input dramatically. In light of this, the media's ability to engage public participation is significant.

The 1997 election day results preceding the state legislature vote demonstrated the limited power of civic leaders to mobilize public opinion, while challenging the notion that Pittsburghers would be willing to do anything to retain sports teams to preserve their reputation as a "major league" city. The initiative failed for a variety of reasons. Among the most compelling was the opposition's ability to frame the issue as a "stadium tax" despite attempts to structure the legislation to include a broader list of community infrastructure improvements. The passionate sports fanaticism of many in the Pittsburgh area was offset by a distaste for sports industry economics. Nevertheless, media coverage of this event occasionally fell victim to elite-driven "boosterism" that excluded a variety of community voices.

The politics of exclusion, something that had proven successful in other community stadium initiatives (Sage 1993), backfired considerably in this case. Opponents intermittently reminded voters that better ideas might have been considered if other voices had been included in the early stages of the planning process. Despite opposition inability to run a single ad in the local evening news on KDKA and WTAE, the "vote no" message was able to cut through heavy pro-initiative rhetoric and advertising, in part because impassioned public opinion was stacked against

initiative passage from the outset.

Last minute endorsements from celebrities, including Steelers Head Coach Bill Cowher could not sway the populous. Unlike Cincinnati and Tampa, both successful in similar sales tax stadium referendum votes, the Pittsburgh stadium advocates lost because of a series of historic and unfolding developments that challenged the credibility of claims made by Regional Renaissance proponents. John Aldrich and Thomas Weko (1995) cogently argue that public acceptance of policy proposals in national elections are constrained by their perceived credibility. The same can be said for local politics. In this case, many voters felt the claims of initiative supporters were suspect, in part, because a Pittsburgh area "think tank" was instrumental in challenging key assumptions made by initiative proponents. Practical questions regarding the necessity of two new stadiums, some feelings of general nostalgia for Three Rivers Stadium, and some level of mistrust of politicians and press routines which favored pro-stadium elites further challenged those arguing in favor of the Regional Renaissance Initiative.

With a pro-initiative budget that exceeded a sixty to one spending ratio over the opposition, it should not be surprising that media coverage was somewhat slanted in many instances to favor the voices of political leaders in favor of the initiative. Just days prior to the public referendum vote, the two best organized opposition groups reported total fund-raising receipts of a mere $63,524 while pro-initiative forces raised approximately $4 million (O'Toole and Schmitz 1997). Despite this, news coverage provided just enough focus on public opposition to allow stadium opponents to articulate their objections to the plan.

In referendum campaigns organized in other cities, success at the polls was often predicated on carefully orchestrated media campaigns. No matter how dedicated a region is to its sports teams, most introductory tax hikes are almost always unpopular with voters in early public opinion polling. Without an intense selling effort, obtaining stadium construction funding is highly unlikely. Public distaste for the sports subsidy issue generally dictates that other issues be

introduced as part of the legislative package. The Pittsburgh initiative followed a similar pattern.

In the early stages of the Pittsburgh initiative, organizers recognized the importance of an effective media campaign as a means of achieving success. In June 1997 the Regional Renaissance Partnership, a coalition of business leaders in favor of the initiative, hired HMS Partners, a Columbus, OH based advertising and public relations firm with a reputation for running successful media campaigns for stadium sales tax hikes in Tampa, FL and Cincinnati, OH. The Partnership, chaired by USX Chief Thomas Usher, later shifted primary responsibility for the public relations campaign to the California-based Winner/Wagner & Mandabach (O'Toole and Schmitz 1997).

An Associated Press article suggested that the Pittsburgh vote was a particularly tough sell since, unlike Cincinnati, the state legislature had to formally approve the ballot initiative before it could be offered to voters (Stanley 1997). The proposal later sailed through the state house and senate, making public opinion the most visible and difficult barrier for passage. Both Tampa and Cincinnati faced uphill battles and early polls were negative, so the likelihood of passage in Pittsburgh, although difficult, appeared achievable. Nevertheless, the Pittsburgh initiative faced an additional difficulty because it covered a much wider geographic range than Cincinnati or Tampa after legislators and business leaders decided to offer the initiative in ten counties surrounding Pittsburgh as a means of raising additional funds for Pittsburgh metropolitan area projects.

In the fall of 1997, political and civic leaders proposed a regional half-cent sales tax as a way to spur economic growth through a variety of projects that included enhancements to the city's convention center, basic infrastructure improvements, subsidies for art and cultural projects, and, not surprisingly, funds for new stadium construction. The legislation was made more palatable to surrounding counties through creation of a formula that promised that 75% of all revenues to the county collecting the tax and allowing some degree of flexibility in how these monies were spent. An additional public boost was given to the campaign when Pennsylvania

Governor Tom Ridge frequently declared that $361 million in matching funds would be available for area projects, but only if the region developed a revenue pool to show a strong commitment to the various projects. According to Ridge, funds would be available, but the region had to be a "partner" with the state. The state would not hand over funds without a clear plan that had regional backing. Implicit in the governor's message was the suggestion that failure to pass the referendum could result in the loss of millions of dollars in funding to other regions of the state.

As with other recent stadium initiatives, an effort was made to tailor this proposal to address other local concerns with the presumable hope that it would defuse the stadium controversy. The Regional Renaissance Partnership expanded the program to include an array of infrastructure concerns aimed at revitalizing the area economy. In addition to two new sports facilities, the proposal would have allowed for expansion of the area convention center, monies for the arts, and a variety of smaller construction programs in each county voting on the legislation. In a move that backfired in the later stages of the campaign, the Partnership failed to consult surrounding county commissioners for input regarding fine-tuning the legislation. Such input may have severely strained the ability of Pittsburgh area lawmakers to craft a workable proposal, but such inclusion would have limited political fallout, reducing the chances that this initiative would be publicly perceived as the product of Allegheny county elites. Not surprisingly, several county-level politicians openly opposed the proposal, reducing the chances for passage in surrounding counties substantially. Of the 29 elected county commissioners outside of Allegheny county, only three went on record in support of the plan (County Commissioners...1997).

As the campaign closed in on election day, Regional Renaissance Initiative advocates focused on media purchases and carefully targeted press releases with a war chest that had ballooned to more than $4 million (O'Toole and Schmitz 1997). One of the more compelling ads featured World War II era factory footage, followed by a carefully crafted montage that suggested a more modern and optimistic future. The voice over compellingly stated "we can continue to live

in the shadow of the past and go downhill, or we can change and make our region strong again." The piece didn't include a single stadium image, focusing instead on jobs, technology, and infrastructure-related footage. In another advertisement, Kevin McClatchy and Dan Rooney touted their proposed $85 million commitment to the stadium projects and their willingness to "sign a 25 year ironclad lease to show that we want to be here long-term" (Schmitz 1997). Both ads ran frequently during the final days before the vote. The initiative gained further publicity when popular Steelers' Coach Bill Cowher openly endorsed the plan in the last week of October. NFL Commissioner Paul Tagliabue stressed the importance of a new stadium for the future of the Steelers. While the commissioner's intent was to spur public support, the likely public response was either neutral or negative. Nevertheless, press coverage of elite voices was evident here.

Opponents of the measure relied on door to door handbills, sales of bumper stickers, t-shirts, and yard signs, small personal donations, and an energetic, yet loosely organized effort that included a healthy outpouring of letters to the editor and talk radio call-ins (for strategy examples: see Good Sports Homepage). The significance of media access was recognized by initiative opposition. Without adequate funding to produce and air television commercials, alternative means of public communication were sought by anyone passionate about blocking the proposal. Web sites were maintained by the Allegheny Institute, a conservative think tank, and Good Sports, a grass roots organization, attempted to inform voters via computer modem access. The sites featured varied font sizes, attractive graphics, and access to various other resources that were aimed at educating voters in a way that would further their cause. Initiative supporters offered their own web site, a rather simple looking, yet efficient site that included detailed information in a format that, ironically, had a more "grass roots" look than their underfunded counterparts (Community Alliance). Surprisingly, the page was pulled down on the day after election day, a somewhat arrogant move that limited post-election web browsers to opponent sources.

Despite being outspent by a better than sixty to one margin, opposition forces handily won

in the November 4, 1997 regional election. The measure was soundly defeated in all 11 counties in which it appeared. In some counties, the initiative was outvoted by close to a four to one margin. Even in Allegheny County, the initiative's strongest base, the gap was a sizable 16% margin with 58% voting against the half-cent tax. The results were highly disappointing to Pittsburgh Steelers' President Dan Rooney and Pirates' owner Kevin McClatchy. Both had pinned their hopes on passage of the referendum as a means of acquiring funds to construct two new sports facilities which would replace Three Rivers Stadium and yield higher skybox revenues and offer a variety of other enhancements, including, most significantly, more favorable contractual terms with the city of Pittsburgh. Despite the setback, sports franchise owners and Mayor Murphy, and two Allegheny County Commissioners continued to work both publicly and behind the scenes on alternative plans to obtain funding for new stadium construction. Maintaining positive press relations was a major part of this continuing effort to obtain stadium funding. Predictably, news coverage tended to give the pro-stadium side of the story greater levels of coverage. After the initiative's failure, coverage that tended to more aggressively privilege pro-stadium voices continued until passage of a state funding package on February 3, 1999.

The type of citizen involvement that is reflective of civic journalism was not usually part of Pittsburgh area coverage. Letters to the editor offered a highly diverse range of frustration with the stadium funding efforts, giving a clear indication that this issue would be ideal for application of civic journalism strategies. Pro-stadium and anti-stadium voices were both prevalent in letters, suggesting that reporters might be missing solid opportunities to clarify the political process as it related to this issue. When street-level efforts were made to interact with citizens, the slant tended to be pro-stadium in nature. In one example, the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* offers coverage of "young stadium backers" making a pilgrimage to lobby in the state capitol on the eve of the successful vote for state funding. A paragraph and a half of the over thirty paragraph story was devoted to opposition efforts (Fitzpatrick 1999). Although not as frequent, media activism of

opposition to the stadium construction effort could be found on occasion. This is more prevalent, however, before the failed referendum vote; the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette,* for example, prominently featured former Pirates star Jim Rooker opposing initiative to raise sales taxes approximately a month before election day (Barnes 1997).

This pro-stadium slant was more consistently evident with local television news coverage than with newspaper coverage. Nevertheless, it would be unfair to suggest no attempts were made to provide some balance in both newspaper and television news. At times, attempts at balance were hollow, but some coverage did prominently display information or images that were clearly detrimental to stadium funding proponents. Two *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* examples include a full color front-page photo of tax protestors on the day before the election (November 3, 1997) and a front page story ten days before the election (October 25, 1997) highlighting the $4 million fund-raising efforts of the Regional Renaissance Partnership. The article revealed that "the largest contributors, by far, were the Pirates and Steelers, whose proposed neighborhoods would be among the prime beneficiaries of the half-cent sales tax increase" (O'Toole and Schmitz 1997). This coverage occurred at a time when proponents of the plan were working feverishly to distance stadium issues from larger arguments about regional infrastructure revitalization.

The *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette's* coverage occasionally attempted balance, but heavy focus on Pittsburgh Mayor Tom Murphy served to front-load the coverage in favor of the stadium construction position while generally limiting the prominence of other community voices. Murphy, an energetic leader with Peace Corps pedigree and an abiding faith in the future of his home town, provided a compelling focus for media practitioners, but the intensity of this focus appeared to limit the inclusion of other voices in a rather dramatic way.

Editorial opinion was clearly pro-initiative throughout and after the election campaign. An October 12, 1997 piece by Editor John Craig, Jr. did not address the initiative specifically, but it chronicled several area companies that benefited from regional subsidies and are now paying back

"in taxes many times the money their company had received from state and local government" (Craig 1997). On the Sunday before the referendum, the paper devoted the entire above the fold front page to an editorial trumpeting the benefits of the initiative. Issued on the day of its highest weekly circulation, the editorial, entitled "Vote Yes for Region's Future," argued that if the vote did not pass, Pittsburgh "will be diminished....A city that had a chance to vote for the future, risk a few dollars on what might be, but decided instead that it was more comfortable leaving its future in the hands of others" (Vote Yes 1997). Editorials in 1998 and 1999 continued to push proposals of pro-stadium legislators, while letters to the editor included a range of views.

In stark contrast, the *Tribune-Review*, a Westmoreland county-based daily, provided an anti-initiative bias that, on the surface, was a surprising departure from the routines of other Pittsburgh area newsrooms. Nevertheless, *Tribune-Review* Publisher Richard M. Scaife, a Pittsburgh area billionaire of national stature, postured himself as a vehement initiative opponent early in the campaign. His involvement didn't stop with newspaper coverage, however. He was instrumental in funding the Allegheny Institute for Public Policy, a conservative think tank aimed at privatization and lower taxes. The institute president, Jerry Bowyer, was the most vociferous public voice of opposition regarding the initiative.

The *Tribune-Review's* three to one circulation disadvantage did not prevent Scaife from public grandstanding on the issue. On his Sunday, November 2 editorial page, he printed a copy of a letter from *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* Publisher John Robinson Block, challenging Scaife to a public debate on the issue. Next to the letter was a response from Scaife, chastising him for his $2 million investment in the Pirates and his status as a registered voter in Toledo, OH (The Invitation...The Response 1997). Scaife's editors often identified pro-initiative letters to the editor with civic leader titles in an "editor's note." The tactic seemed to be aimed at undercutting the credibility of these submissions. On October 30 the *Tribune-Review* identified one letter writer as Chief Executive Officer of Mellon Bank and another as press coordinator for the Community

Alliance for Economic Development (Letters 1997). Even with the limited circulation of the *Tribune-Review*, its general anti-initiative slant offered a clear departure from the tendencies of typical pro-development boosterism.

The *Tribune Review* provided many stories that utilized traditional reporting routines that focused on the push for stadium construction, however. In these stories, Mayor Tom Murphy, Governor Tom Ridge, and the team owners are often the central focus. As such, the problematic nature of typical news routines favored the articulation of elite voices that tended to be pro-stadium. Regardless, the *Tribune Review* was generally less inclined to accept the claims of these leaders as valid, often bringing stadium-related views into their reports.

After the referendum failed, opposition coverage was less evident, suggesting that post-election coverage provided an incomplete picture of the community. Lack of public opinion information in media sources further distanced the press from the public. The lack of public opinion data after the failed referendum vote and more specific focus on community response to this issue shows some of the limitations of reporting methodologies that are rooted in traditional reliance on elite sources alone. When reporters attempted to focus on public involvement, the result tended to favor citizen desires for new construction initiatives.

Examining media deficiencies- Setting the stage for a civic journalism alternative:

This general pro-development slant in other media sources is not surprising for a variety of reasons. First, the individuals pushing for support of the initiative were leaders of the same major corporations that provide substantial advertising to area media interests. Although some effort may be made to provide balance, scholars and practitioners generally recognize that such an ideal is difficult at best when advertising revenue is at stake (Altschull 1996, Bagdikian 1990). While most newsroom personnel have limited direct contact with those in advertising sales, they are aware that the viability of their product is attributable to revenues achieved from sponsors. In one not so subtle example of how these economic pressures that can be applied, a 1995 *Pittsburgh*

magazine article detailing city subsidies to the Pirates organization resulted in termination of future advertising from the baseball club (Studies On.. 1997). Reporters may not be reluctant to report both sides of an issue, but if this reporting caused alienation of sponsors that might result in revenue losses, it can potentially draw the ire of top management. Such pressures can act as a cautionary force for reporters when business leaders are involved. This specific issue is among the most difficult to face in any attempt to implement civic journalism strategies.

The general nature of news routines might provide an equally compelling reason for the slant. The pro-community nature of news reporting tends to naturally favor the types of community enhancements that were part of the initiative. Daniel Boorstin's (1965) description of a "booster press" that helped spur 19th century expansion of America suggests that such reporting patterns have been a traditional part of American journalism for some time. In addition, the role of personal relationships can't be underestimated as a source of potential bias. In general, news reporters simply come into contact more frequently with community leaders that support these types of programs. Such contacts influence whose voices are featured more prominently. A recent study of reporting routines in the Chicago area argues that "reporter's contacts were not as diverse as one might have thought" (Dopelt 1994, p.128). When Pittsburgh Mayor Tom Murphy and several other key political leaders vociferously backed the initiative, reporters simply plugged into this network of current contacts as a means of covering their stories. The opposition's ability to place Allegheny County Commissioner Larry Dunn and Allegheny Institute President Jerry Bowyer into various news settings was a prudent move to prevent complete monopolization of valuable air time or print space. It is unlikely, however, that either of these individuals would be placed higher on the coverage roster than the city mayor. In fact, after the referendum vote, their voices were less prominent, giving the pro-stadium forces an even greater level of visibility and credibility. Citizens were much less likely to be included in the dialogue, and public opinion data was limited at best. While civic journalism would not fully avoid this problem, it would improve

the nature and level of community representation.

News coverage, particularly highly visual television news, is much more personality and event driven than might be beneficial for such complex issues, but under such conditions, prominent civic leaders have a considerable edge in obtaining media access (Iyengar 1991). Because most of the key leaders in Pittsburgh and Allegheny county supported the initiative, a common coverage strategy led with the mayor, a civic leader, and/or a team owner with a critical voice following. In tight television coverage, the opposition voice was sometimes squeezed out, but a general mention of opposition response often served as a weaker substitute for this voice. In some regards, coverage of team owner positions had the unintended consequence of negative public perception since many voters were turned off by anything perceived to be a subsidy of professional sports franchises.

Initiative proponents recognized their access advantage, and attempted to shape the news accordingly. On the night before the vote, the Steelers faced the Chiefs in a nationally televised Monday night football game. Dan Rooney made himself available to this national audience, arguing that the stadium was needed "if we are to compete" with other NFL franchises (ABC 1997). The interview was preceded by sportscaster comments praising Rooney's leadership abilities and supporting his view in the strongest terms possible. Similarly, Mayor Tom Murphy maintained an aggressive public profile, often pushing harder for the initiative than for his own reelection campaign. Television's best attempt to offer balance occurred in many public affairs programs that focused on the issue, but such programs often aired at times when viewership is traditionally low. One such example, "Regional Renaissance Tax: Growth or Greed," aired on Sunday, November 2, 1997 at 10:00am. It included many county commissioners, Pennsylvania Senator Rick Santorum, Steelers President Dan Rooney, Pirates Owner Kevin McClatchy, Allegheny Institute President Jerry Bowyer, and a variety of other civic leaders. Average citizens were not in the live audience.

On October 28, at a time when the campaign was in severe trouble because of its stereotyped image as a "stadium tax," the Community Alliance for Economic Development, the marketing arm of the Regional Renaissance Partnership, issued a press release emphasizing the endorsement of cultural leaders for the initiative. The release seemed relatively insignificant, but the cultural angle was a lead story on both KDKA and WTAE TV news that evening. It also appeared prominently in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* (Bucsko 1997). The stories suggested a reporting pattern that dictated following the lead of civic leaders and public relations contacts. It also served to show that some news slant was the result of sophisticated efforts to jump into the net cast by local news gatherers. Predictably, the *Tribune-Review* opted not to cover the orchestrated event.

As indicated, with the exception of the *Tribune-Review's* reflexively negative coverage of the initiative, news routines generally favored the initiative's passage. This skewing of coverage was highly evident when watching the televised coverage on election day. Despite the apparent defeat of the plan, WTAE 6:00pm News focused more prominently on support of the initiative, giving this heavy coverage up front and explaining the merits of their proposal before giving victorious initiative opponents a chance to speak. Reporter Sheldon Ingram opened his report by stating "I talked to a lot of persons during the sales tax campaign and many said that they think Pittsburgh is 20 years behind the rest of the country. They say [sic] that progressivism is not a strong characteristic of this region, and its also a strong reason why they voted yes at the polls" (WTAE News 1997, November 4). Before giving the opposition coverage, four pro-initiative clips were shown, including an interview with Patti Burns, a leader of the pro-initiative movement. The final clip was a young woman asserting that "when you go into Cleveland you see that they are very, very affluent, and there is a lot of industry there, but we seem to be dying." Nina Pineda's live coverage of the anti-initiative effort avoided interviews with leaders of the movement, concentrating instead on typical voters. She emphasized unpredictable demographics

of the anti-tax voters, asserting that "there was no rhyme or reason to those voting against the sales tax." She closed with the offsetting remark that anti-initiative voters "said they took the time to read the fine print, and hope voters in all 11 counties took the time to do the same." She did not delineate what fine print items caused voters to respond negatively, but a clip between the two statements offered a male voter stating that "there's a lot of stuff hidden in the bill they're not telling us about."

By 11:00 pm, when the outcome was abundantly clear, KDKA News utilized a similar reporting format, focusing intently on the pro-initiative voices, including Mayor Tom Murphy and Patti Burns, before giving the victorious opponents a chance to speak. A live feed of the victorious anti-initiative coverage at the Bloomfield Ridge Tavern kicked off with an interview of Allegheny County Commissioner Larry Dunn. He congratulated fellow initiative opponents, suggested a meeting with sports franchise owners, argued for a "Plan B" that included more private sector investment, and asked opponents to work together in the future "to heal the wounds" caused by the bitter campaign. His remarks, although shorter than the previous pro-initiative voices, were cut off as the studio continued with election coverage. Staunch opponents of the sales tax argued that KDKA's minority investment in the Pirates skewed their coverage of this issue (Good Sports 1997). It is just as likely that the tight schedule of election night coverage necessitated a cut-off of Dunn after over committing to the live remarks of the mayor. Nevertheless, the general pattern of airing pro-initiative coverage first served to frequently shortchange the opposition.

After the failure of the referendum, television coverage continued to utilize the same focus on key area leaders with Mayor Tom Murphy, Governor Tom Ridge, and team owners sharing the limelight at various intervals. Anti-stadium sources were more frequently pushed to the margins than in previous coverage. Newspaper coverage reflected similar tendencies, but Governor Ridge's Press Secretary, Tim Reeves, took on an increasingly important role in the weeks leading

up to passage of pro-stadium legislation on February 3, 1999. Most stories tended to focus on ways to achieve funding rather than whether funding should take place. The shift in focus tended to marginalize opposition and in the case of some television coverage, led to some degree of overt support for stadium funding that extended beyond the bounds of fair and balanced journalism. KDKA news coverage by John Shumway on December 18, 1998 reported that recent Governor success in obtaining interim funding for site preparation and land acquisition prevented Pirates owner Kevin McClatchy from "putting a value on the team, a first step to selling the Bucos [Pirates]." In the post-reporting banter, news anchor Patrice King Brown observed that "we have to hope that the vote goes through if we want to see our Pirates staying around." Shumway followed with a quick and enthusiastic "you got it!" (KDKA news, 5:00pm). In live coverage breaking the interim funding story on December 17, 1998 Shumway closed his report by stating "good news today!" Before moving on to the next story, anchor Jennifer Antkowkiak followed enthusiastically with the words "yes, very!" (KDKA news, 5:00pm). In light of demonstrated taxpayer objection to public funding of stadium projects, the overt support of stadium funding reflected poor journalistic judgement. This routine occurred in other instances.

In another example of pro-stadium boosterism was WTAE's morning coverage of Governor Ridge's proposal to make $330 million dollars available for non-stadium projects. The actuality was obtained at Piratefest, a fan-friendly marketing effort of the Pittsburgh Pirates. The January 23, 1999 piece opened with a fan saying "Whatever it takes to save the Pirates, I think that is fine." After the introduction of the governor's proposal and actuality of a fan saying "it's been disappointing," reporter Nina Pineda assertively emphasized that "it's been maddening to fans who just want the security that our city will retain professional sports and find it confusing to follow what has been happening in Harrisburg." The report included an interview with Pirates owner Kevin McClatchy and another enthusiastic Pirates fan, but did not offer a single voice that had reservations about the stadium funding proposal. As the report closed, Pineda reported that

"we did touch base with local legislators and they seem pretty receptive to this plan."

Despite the general bias of televised coverage, opposing views were offered at times. In many cases news footage was provided for pro-stadium voices while opposition was merely mentioned by reporters. On November 20, 1998 KDKA offered a shift in reporting tendencies with a brief coverage and actuality of Allegheny County Commissioner Larry Dunn discussing stadium funding opposition. The report closed with the statement that the mayor and two other county commissioners "believe [stadium financing] is vital to the region's economy" but did not include pro-stadium actuality (KDKA news, 5:00pm). Although WTAE offered a pro-stadium slant in most coverage, they periodically provided a variety of citizen voices into their "Viewer Feedback" segment at the close of newscasts. Anti-stadium voices from the public aired with greater frequency during these feedback segments, but the generally low quality of phone line audio may have diminished the effectiveness of this public input. WTAE often provides colorful graphics to offset this limitation, however.

Predictably, newspaper coverage, with greater capacity for detail, was better able to provide information that might not be acceptable to political leaders and team owners. As an example, after Pittsburgh Mayor Tom Murphy clearly lost an embarrassing legislative battle on a technical legal issue, the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* provided in-depth coverage and provided the full text of the mayor's personal apology to state legislators for his involvement in what became known as "stealth" legislation (Murphy's Letter/Double Crossed 1998). In another case, columnist Bob Smizik (1998) attacked the contributions promised by team owners to finance the stadium as absurdly marginal.

Passage of legislation to publicly fund new stadium construction in Pittsburgh did not appear to have the support of the citizens of western Pennsylvania. One of the most compelling pieces of evidence was a *Wall Street Journal* editorial which stated that anti-stadium calls to local legislators outpaced pro-stadium calls by a margin of almost 100 to one (End Run 1999). An

Associated Press story printed on the morning of the state funding vote quoted a Republican source indicating that "the fear of losing their jobs on this one is so great that I don't think it matters what the governor says" (Durantine, 1999). Sadly these sources were not generally seen by Pittsburgh area citizens.

Those covering the issue repeatedly suggested that the public would not object to stadium funding if a formula could be achieved to insulate the taxpayers from new forms of taxation. Minimal turnout at public meetings following the failed referendum were cited as evidence that this claim was accurate (No New Taxes 1998). Unfortunately, no media source was able to fully determine the accuracy of these claims, nor did any appear interested in resolving this issue. Employment of civic journalism might have led to greater clarity on public sentiment, while offering new ideas that might have resulted in greater benefits for all parties involved.

It is likely that sports franchise owners would be highly resistant to employment of civic journalism because it might limit their ability to control the process. Despite this, it is uncertain that civic journalism would necessarily result in outright rejection of future stadium projects. In fact, in a sports-minded community like Pittsburgh, it is possible that area citizens could be convinced that new investment in sports infrastructure is an important regional priority. Mayor Tom Murphy's re-election victory by a greater than two to one margin suggests that the citizens have a high level of respect for his tireless efforts to improve the region. As a result, opposition to stadium funding might be somewhat soft among some Pittsburgh area residents. Despite this, it should not be up to journalists to determine these priorities. In acting as a conveyor belt for civic leader interests, reporters may be guilty of pluralistic ignorance. In many instances, citizens looked at political leaders, team owners, and media practitioners as elites with shared interests and pre-determined agendas. If citizens were brought together in a creative manner that did not attempt to stack the deck against funding opposition, public disdain for authority might be minimized. Instead, many citizens currently look at the process as a closed circle of elite interests.

In many ways, the general direction of media coverage may have undermined the democratic process in the eyes of many citizens, making active involvement in future political causes unlikely.

Careful examination of over 18 months of Pittsburgh area media coverage suggests that an ideology of boosterism may skew coverage in a somewhat profound way. This did not seem to sway a highly skeptical public to support civic leaders. Despite the pro-stadium slant of coverage, a number of stories demonstrated that Pittsburgh area reporters are capable of probing beyond basic press releases and interviews with community elites, but they are often influenced to follow stories that have been choreographed. Nevertheless, the stadium issue did expose some media opportunities for Pittsburgh area practitioners. In one example, KDKA and the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* began a Sunday morning public affairs program on the Sunday immediately before the election. The collaboration between the two organizations continues today. Although the program tends to favor interviews with civic leaders, it provides an improvement over past public affairs options and this pooling of resources offers possibilities for future programs that involve a wider segment of the community. Similarly, as the stadium issue unfolded, the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette's* PG Benchmarks series seemed to offer an improved array of options for citizens to contemplate. The final PG Benchmarks report in 1998 provided the thoughtful examination of a number of citizens relative to the possibilities of waterfront development (Heuck 1998). The effort did not focus specifically on the stadium issue, but instead allowed citizens to comment on a wide range of development and recreational possibilities. The *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, the *Tribune Review*, KDKA, and WTAE are sufficiently talented to provide quality reporting that serve their community in a meaningful way. Nevertheless, clear improvements could be made in each instance. A recent *Columbia Journalism Review* evaluation of overall television reporting quality gave KDKA and WTAE grades of D and F- respectively (Rosenstiel, Gottlieb, Brady, 1999). It is likely that greater commitment to civic journalism could offer a greater range of voices and an

improved depth of coverage while correcting subtle and overt bias that exists in current reporting strategies.

It is unlikely that Pittsburgh will employ civic journalism on the stadium issue now that funding is in place for construction of two new stadia that should last for at least a generation. But use of such a strategy in future events or for coverage of stadium construction issues might help improve the credibility of media institutions in Pittsburgh. Many cities in facing similar concerns regarding stadium construction might consider the difficulties faced by Pittsburgh media in their attempt to cover the stadium issue with traditional reporting strategies. Los Angeles and New York are two major metropolitan areas currently struggling with a debate about future stadium funding. Many smaller metropolitan areas are examining the feasibility of stadium funding for minor league teams or are looking to lure big league teams from other cities through use of stadium initiatives.

Several critics of civic journalism have openly argued that its commitment to citizen involvement and consensus building is synonymous with "boosterism" (Fouhy and Schaffer 1995). Examination of traditional media routines in the stadium funding issue suggests that boosterism can be an unintentional and inherent feature of traditional reporting methods. When this is considered, civic journalism may be regarded as a more attractive strategy for determining policies that will best serve a given community. In many regards, traditional media coverage of the stadium issue resulted in the type of elite-driven reporting tendencies that have been noted by various media scholars since Warren Breed's (1955) seminal analysis of newsroom "slanting."

As sports owners push communities to increase the level of public subsidy for stadium construction, leaders need to carefully examine whether such subsidies reflect the heartfelt desires of the community. In the absence of federal legislation to limit team movement, perhaps employment of civic journalism remains the best hope for ensuring that community needs and desires remain on the table during the discussion of stadium funding issues.

In fact, with the stadium funding issue, it is quite possible that civic journalism has national application beyond the somewhat predictable Presidential election framework. The stadium-funding question might be that single issue that could readily involve a wide segment of the population, while helping Americans determine the delicate balance between entertainment and legislative priorities.

Whether public funding of stadium projects is in the best interests of the citizenry is highly questionable. Despite this, several failed ballot initiatives have resulted in subsequent legislative override. A Brookings Institution analysis of direct democracy and nationwide stadium construction trends soberly concludes that "direct democracy can have an ameliorative impact..., but can't be counted on to stem the tide....The people speak and stadium construction continues apace" (Forte 1997, p. 170). A broad examination of media coverage in the Pittsburgh case offers evidence that traditional journalistic routines fail to involve the public in an aggressive manner.

It is uncertain whether a change in journalistic routines would alter this tendency, but a greater reliance on civic journalism would certainly bring a higher level of community input into the process. The fact that public opinion polling was not offered in mainstream media sources after the failed 1997 referendum, suggests that coverage was more concerned with pursuit of traditional strategies that focus on top-down approaches to governing than coverage ideas that could involve citizens in the democratic process. Ironically, the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* did offer public opinion data just days prior to Pennsylvania's legislative vote on the issue, but it was information on the general approval of Connecticut's citizens to building a new stadium to attract the Patriots to Hartford (Reeves 1998, B1). James Lemert cogently argues that this reporting strategy, which reporters commonly call "Afghanistanism," "reduces the audience's motivation to participate" (1994, p.52).

The *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* tends to cover stories in a manner that reflect the reporting tendencies of nationally distributed publications such as the *New York Times*. Not surprisingly,

these strategies have been a model for much of the nation for decades. Because traditional coverage tendencies often exclude public participation, some of the public distrust of media may be rather deep-seated. In 1974 one Pittsburgh sports fan caustically asserted that "the press is controlled by the same people with money and power who run the city, run the businesses, and run the team [Steelers]" (Connally, 1974, p. 44).

Prior to the emergence of civic journalism Philip Meyer (1979) made an aggressive call for greater technical and interpretive precision in press coverage as a way to improve media's long-term usefulness to society. More recently, he has cautioned that strategies to improve journalism might be most constrained by media management's reluctance to commit assets to strategies that cultivate a participatory citizenship (Meyer 1998). In a market-driven economy, such concerns are rather predictable. After all, Frank Denton and Esther Thorson state that one project in public journalism left citizens "with specific tools and information to become 'armed and dangerous'"(1998, p.156). The implication is that civic journalism may complicate the ready-made plans of elites. But just as the initial idea for a ballpark in Baltimore's Camden Yards was the brainchild of Eric Moss, an unknown graduate student, other imaginative ideas worthy of national recognition may be derived when the public is truly engaged in the process. (Richmond 1993).

Civic journalism is an extension of the highly desirable goal of a socially responsible press. In an age when many citizens have opted out of active citizenship, news credibility is predictably extremely low. Perhaps the activist strategies of civic journalism would contribute to a gradual change in this undesirable tendency, leading to subsequent improvements in long-term market share. If civic journalism were linked to an issue that resonates with the public in a profound way, it could provide the type of momentum needed to reinvigorate journalistic credibility in a profound and meaningful way. For some metropolitan areas, the stadium issue could serve such a purpose.

It is probable that rebuilding substantial and durable trust in media institutions would take more time and resources than many media entrepreneurs are willing to invest. If the quarterly

report is the unit of analysis for measurement of civic journalism's success, civic journalism is unlikely to be tried in some of America's largest newsrooms. After all, a recent report on journalism quality suggests that even in the most profitable markets, staffing levels are such that "a culture of superficiality and haste" is the norm (Jones, 1999, p. 79). If a longer frame of analysis is utilized, the future of civic journalism may be bright indeed.

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Being a Better Neighbor:
A Look at How the Syracuse Newspapers Listened to Readers to Improve Neighborhood News Coverage

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Abstract

Today's newspapers face many challenges -- dwindling readership, circulation decline and increased financial pressure. But all is not lost. Strategies entitled "new journalism" or "market-driven" or "reader-friendly" have been tested and employed to aid in the effort to resuscitate newspapers.

This case study explores how the Syracuse Newspapers used these strategies to restructure its news product. Based on focus group findings from readers, editors redesigned the layout and reformulated the news content of their suburban tabloid *Neighbors* , to provide the news readers wanted. Today, *Neighbors* succeeds because it provides the suburban readers with relevant news of their community, and strengthens the relationship they have with the newspaper. Advertisers like the product as it delivers an important target audience. The readers are satisfied because the newspaper listened. And the newspaper is has seen the benefits of becoming a better neighbor to their readers.

Being a Better Neighbor: A Look at How the Syracuse Newspapers Listened to Readers to Improve Neighborhood News Coverage

Introduction

It's no secret that newspapers today are facing many challenges. A survey of editors and industry experts published in *Editor & Publisher Magazine* revealed that "newspapers are in a period of transition as they move toward the 21st century" (Ruffini, 1993). Dwindling readership is among the most vexing and chronic problems presently threatening the newspaper industry. American newspaper readership has been declining for 30 years (Kurtz, 1997). In 1970, 78% of American adults read a daily newspaper (NAA Facts, 1997). Today, just over half (55%) of adults make time to read a newspaper, a 30% drop (Belden, 1996-97). The reasons for this drop are plentiful; new media choices, two wage-earner households, more women in the workplace and the fitness craze are just some of the changes that have limited consumer's time to read the newspaper (Beaven, 1995).

While newspapers have long competed with television for readers' time, technological advancements have now ushered in an entirely new media craze. Consumers have a plethora of information and entertainment choices -- the World Wide Web, electronic mail, computer games, over 100 cable channels, and high-definition television. The competition for time doesn't stop there, as an *Editor and Publisher Magazine* survey stresses: ". . . papers not only compete with television for the time of a prospective reader but also with movies, videotapes, games, hobbies, and household chores" (Ruffini, 1993).

Furthermore, loyal newspaper readers are aging, and as that core readership continues to decline, fewer new readers are joining the ranks. According to two Belden Market Studies conducted in 1996 and 1997, 71% of adults 65 years and older, and 69% of adults from 55 to 64 years old, read a daily paper. However, younger demographic groups do not share the same allegiance as the old guard. Only 43% of 18-24 year olds and 42% of 25-34 year olds read the paper daily.

Financial pressures have also dogged newspaper management throughout the '90s. Newspapers have seen their traditional ad base decline, the cost of newsprint soar, and the number of competitors heat up. Department stores, newspapers' cash cows, consolidated throughout the 1990's -- a move that hurt ad revenue. As giant mass-merchandisers like Wal-Mart moved into markets, local merchants, the core advertisers of most dailies, are often squeezed out (Caughey, 1994). And Wal-Mart, whose policy is to distribute advertising via the mail or door-to-door, has not replenished the loss in advertising dollars to the newspaper. In addition, competition has intensified in all markets with the dramatic growth of direct mail, local cable TV systems and the Internet, all of which swipe ad dollars away from the local newspaper (Farhi, 1997). As advertising dollars declined, newsprint prices soared. Newsprint can account for as much as 20% of a newspaper's overhead (Farhi, 1997). In 1996, newsprint prices nearly doubled, hurting profits even more as overhead costs grew and advertising income deteriorated.

As if this turmoil in the industry was not enough, the credibility of journalists and newspapers became a top news item among industry publications and conferences, in local newsrooms and within the news media. A three-year study focusing on Journalism Credibility was recently release by the American Society of Newspaper Editors. This research identified several reasons why the public perceives a lack of credibility in the media. Key to newspapers was the finding that "the public perceives that newspapers don't consistently demonstrate respect for, and knowledge of, their readers and their communities" (ASNE, 1998, p. 1). More than half (53%) of those interviewed for the study believed that the press was "out-of-touch with mainstream Americans" (ASNE, 1998, p. 1). Particularly respondents were concerned that reporters did not relate to or really know well the communities that were the focus of their reporting. This finding suggests that newspapers may not be connecting with community and their readership, making it even more difficult to maintain current readers, and almost impossible to attract new readers.

But all is not lost. The ASNE study previously mentioned also revealed that in general, "people cherish newspapers" (ASNE, 1998). A recent *American Journalism Review* article

reports that almost 7 out of 10 people read a Sunday paper," (Layton, p. 54). A new study, by the Newspaper Association of America, reports that there might even be a new generation of readers to replace the older, loyal ones who are dying off. In the comprehensive report, *Competing for the Markets of the Future: An Up Close Look at the Media Teens Rely On,* telephone interviews with 1,200 teens showed that newspapers are the 4th most used medium among this group, ranking above the Internet (NAA 1998, p. 5). Sixty-nine percent claimed to have read or looked into a local daily newspaper in the past week (NAA 1998, p. 5). There seems to be hope for newspapers after all.

But in order for newspapers to thwart the threats of competition, declining readership and bottom-line results, the newspapers must change methods, which often lead to criticism that traditional journalistic approaches have eroded (Winter, 1992). The fears of some are that the industry will continue to cling "to old forms and old approaches simply because we love our newspapers, i.e., the traditional, too-often-stodgy, written-for-other-journalists-rather-than-for-readers newspapers we traditionally have tossed on the front porches of our citizenry" (Winter, 1992). Newspaper consultant Joseph Ungaro states that newspapers must adapt and change to survive. According to Ungaro, "We will need to produce newspapers that contain more information, are better written, more tightly edited with presentation that makes possible a rapid reading for very busy consumers. And we will have to do it with resources that are not going to increase very much" (Caughey, 1994).

Strategies entitled "new journalism" to "market-driven" to "reader-friendly" have been tested and employed to aid in the effort to resuscitate newspapers. All of these approaches, as the trade press reveals, have their fair share of supporters and detractors. But for the purposes of this study, these strategies provide a theoretical framework for this study. Thus, it is important to outline some of these tested strategies that help resuscitate newspapers, including the following (Sharon, 1997):

1. A commitment to local news that goes beyond reporting of meetings and events. This requires the development of strong relationships between the individual newsrooms and the communities they are trying to reflect (Winter, 1992).

2. Shift emphasis from traditional governmental reporting to more consumer news, such as: health/fitness, family, education and technology. This moves the reporting away from the traditional bureaucratic process and emphasized the outcomes and impact of key issues that relate to the readers. For instance, education coverage would "focus on lesson plans, how teachers teach, and profiles of the people involved, rather than the bureaucracy in which they operate" (Winter, 1992).

3. Redesign formats to include enhanced use of color, more pictures and explanatory graphics, such as charts, maps, diagrams, etc. Making the newspaper more "reader-friendly" not only makes the information more accessible, it speeds up the reading time - aiding the time-constrained consumer. Properly integrated, these redesign suggestions do not replace the substance of the newspaper, but enhance it.

4. Emphasize better writing and editing to make content more readable and accessible. Many newspapers have cut staff, especially editors to stay profitable. This has taken its toll on the quality of the news product delivered. With the extensive quantity of information that streams into a newsroom today, "the most critical job is selecting and packaging the news," according to Ungaro (Caughey, 1994). That means quality and quantity of staffing.

5. Provide more in-depth coverage of what is most relevant to the readers. Television treats news as entertainment. Here is the opportunity to connect with readers by showing how this news can and will affect their lives (Caughey, 1994).

6. Strive to be more useful, relevant and forge a greater emotional response from the readers. "There is nothing that makes a newspaper more indispensable than a constant stream of stories on how the acts of business, government, social and cultural institutions will touch there lives" says consultant Ungaro (Caughey, 1994).

This paper presents a case study that shows how the Syracuse Newspapers, owned by the Newhouse family, connected with their readership in an attempt to meet the challenges of the marketplace. From listening to their readers and using the information gathered from the research, the Syracuse Newspapers were able to respond to readership needs and expectations while employing many of the strategies mentioned above. This is a case study of a newspaper making an effort to change.

The Method

As in any research, the method for this study was determined by the question to be explored. Because the focus of this study was driven by the desire to see what could be learned from this single situation and how the Syracuse Newspapers adapted to various changes affecting its market, this research was designed as a case study. Stake (1995) and Yin (1994) both suggest that case study is research attempts to answer the "how" and "why" questions, thus helping the researcher to better understand the situation and learn from specific cases.

The case study has been described as the means for exploring an entity or phenomenon ("the case") bounded by time and activity (a process or event), wherein the researcher collects detailed information by using a variety of data collection procedures during a sustained period of time (Creswell, 1994; Yin, 1994). This case study will involve the Syracuse Newspapers' process of adapting to structural re-organization and market changes. Therefore, this is a single case design as prescribed by Yin (1994) or an intrinsic case as suggested by Stake (1995). In both situations, the research of this specific case is undertaken to provide a better understanding of how one newspaper responded to problems presently confronting the entire newspaper industry.

As in any case study, a variety of data collection techniques were used to study the Syracuse newspapers. Stake (1995) states the qualitative case study is characterized by the researcher immersed in the situation by both observing on site and in contact with the activities and operations within the organization. Furthermore, what the researcher is unable to observe is then obtained through interviews and documentation. The techniques used within this study included in-depth interviews, observations, and analysis of documents, the news product before and after,

as well as all research documentation. Interviews were conducted with the assistant managing editor, focus groups were observed, the data from the focus groups were analyzed and the newspaper product was examined by the researchers, both before the changes occurred and for three months following the implementation.

The Case of the Syracuse Newspapers

The Syracuse Newspapers consist of three newspapers: The Syracuse Post-Standard, a morning weekday paper with a circulation of approximately 85,000; The Syracuse Herald-Journal, an evening weekday paper with a circulation of approximately 70,000; and The Syracuse Herald American, a Sunday paper with a circulation of 200,000. Based in Syracuse, New York, these newspapers are privately owned by the Newhouse family. The Syracuse Newspapers have been in business since the 1830's . The Herald American has the 40th highest metropolitan area penetration for Sunday newspapers (64.3%) , according to ABC publisher statements. (SRDS '99). Syracuse is one of only sixty U.S. cities with two or more daily newspapers still in publication. Of those sixty, only 8 have two or more papers published under separate ownership (Farhi, 1997).

Neighbors is a weekly tabloid insert to The Syracuse Post-Standard. Since its inception in the mid-70's, the mission of *Neighbors* was to report news to niche segments of the newspapers' readership base. Each week, *Neighbors* delivered local government and community-based news to three suburban areas in Onondaga County. While some of the coverage was area-specific, overlap coverage was common as well. The tabloid was published on Thursdays and averaged 24 pages per issue.

In March, 1996, the Syracuse Newspapers re-organized the newsroom, merging the morning and evening news staffs. While this was a cost-saving measure, management also believed the consolidation would allow for expanded news coverage in all sections of the newspaper. Immediately following the merger, management determined that a market-driven strategy was appropriate and the first step would be to increase coverage of local and community news. This would require a comprehensive and deliberate effort to redesign, expand and improve

on the suburban news product available to readers, which was the tabloid Neighbors. To facilitate this comprehensive overhaul of providing substantial local/community news coverage, management determined they needed to listen to the readers. Exploratory research was conducted throughout the remainder of 1996 and into 1997.

The Research

In order to obtain readers' opinions in this preliminary stage, two sets of focus group interviews were conducted. While the newspaper hoped to gain reader insights as to what changes needed to occur, they were also hoping to establish a benchmark of the current status of the newspaper in general. This information, along with other research, would then be used to make changes and improvements in both news content and design.

Focus groups are the most frequently used data-collection methods in marketing research today because the method provides a unique opportunity to experience the situation first-hand from the target group. Although focus groups have come under recent fire for being misused, and producing results that editors and publishers find confusing, contradictory or incorrect (Layton, p. 47), they seemed the appropriate research technique to employ to secure readers' feedback and recommendations. Unlike a survey that can restrict respondents to pre-set answers, a focus group, as newspaper veteran, Charles Layton points out, " strips away the straitjacket of the formal survey and lets people just speak their minds" (p. 56). In this case, the Syracuse Newspapers sought the opinions and criticisms of readers and subscribers as a means to provide direction for fundamental improvements of the news product. Furthermore, this method of inquiry offered the newspapers the opportunity to provide their readership a "voice" in those changes, therefore vesting the readers in the news product and process. Two phases of focus groups were conducted. The procedure and results of these two focus groups will be briefly discussed here.

Phase One of Focus Group Interviews

During the summer of 1996, Syracuse Newspapers reporters and editors, serving as focus group facilitators and moderators, conducted a series of four focus groups. Anticipating the need for broader coverage, the newspaper had already re-zoned the suburban territories where the

Neighbors tabloid would eventually circulate. A series of four focus groups were conducted within each of the new *Neighbors* zones - one for each area. Recruitment was conducted by newspaper personnel and recruits were screened based on the following criteria: subscriber vs. reader; high-involved reader vs. low-involved reader; residence location within the Syracuse Newspapers ADI. Participants that were selected included highly-involved readers and subscribers living within the pre-determined suburban-zoned areas. The focus groups ranged in size from six to 15 people, and were approximately ninety minutes in length.

The main objective of the these focus groups was to find out what these "highly involved" readers wanted from news coverage. Two major findings surfaced:

1.) Readers liked the newspaper's current coverage, but they wanted more news about their local communities.

2.) Readers wanted more positive news to appear in the paper on a routine basis.

These preliminary focus groups provided a foundation on which to develop a stronger news product and better coverage. However, because the newspaper had committed to a new zoning pattern, which emphasized the four major suburbs of Onondaga County, it was determined that an assessment of the *Neighbors* section of the newspaper was important.

As mentioned earlier, the *Neighbors* tabloid had been the focus of suburban news for over 20 years. While the editorial staff believed that the *Neighbors* could be the vehicle to serve the needs of suburban residents and achieve the local/community coverage readers' desired, the newspaper staff wanted to hear that from the readers. If these editors were to be charged with the complete reformulation of the suburban news product, they needed to determine what the readers, living in these newly re-zoned suburban areas, wanted from *Neighbors*. As such, more research questions needed to be answered.

To formulate the questions and deliver the answers, *Neighbors'* editors contacted the S.I. Newhouse School's Advertising Department at Syracuse University. A graduate

Advertising/Marketing Research course was used to conduct a second wave of focus group interviews.

The editors provided the questions and the researchers developed them into a moderator's guide for the next round of focus groups. The preliminary questions are outlined below:

1. When it comes to local community coverage, what do individual readers, living in each of the four zoned areas, want from *Neighbors?* What are the most important issues for their community? How could a new, enriched and more localized *Neighbors* help inform them of these issues?

2. How satisfied or dissatisfied are readers with the present *Neighbors* news product? What suggestions do they have to improve the current *Neighbors* tabloid? What is their reaction to the layout and design of *Neighbors?*

3. What would readers like added to *Neighbors?* For example, do readers want more or less coverage of schools, local businesses, crime/safety, sports, and/or local philanthropy?

4. How do readers define "positive" news? What kinds of stories do they deem as positive and would like included in *Neighbors?*

The procedure and findings of this second phase of research conducted by Newhouse graduate students follows.

Phase Two of Focus Group Interviews

Client Briefing. In January, 1997, the newly appointed assistant managing editor of suburban news briefed the 12 master's students enrolled in the research class on the many changes taking place with *Neighbors.* He explained the improvements planned in terms of size, zoning and content and emphasized the need for "first-hand input from the people who rely on this section for their local news." He stressed that the Syracuse Newspapers new mission would be to "give readers local news like it's never been given before."

Procedure. In order to obtain the necessary information to help guide these changes, three students were assigned to each of the four zoned areas and trained in the techniques of conducting

group interviews. Moderator guides were tested and revised three times, while the student researchers conducted pre-tests prior to the final focus groups.

The researchers recruited focus group participants based on the following criteria:

1. current subscriber to the newspaper, *or*

2. a regular purchaser of the newspaper (i.e. buy the paper at least three times per week either from a newsstand or an "honor box"), *and*

3. familiar with the *Neighbors* tabloid.

Four more focus groups were conducted in mid-March within the zoned areas. Each session lasted approximately 75 minutes and consisted of five to 10 participants. Each group session was audio recorded and transcribed for analysis. Written reports were prepared, and presentations of final analysis were delivered to the newspapers' suburban leadership team in April, 1997.

Results. After analyzing the data, a variety of themes emerged from this second set of focus groups. The suburban readers and subscribers recommended the following to the suburban editors:

1. Improve the organization and layout of *Neighbors;*

2. Make *Neighbors* more user-friendly;

3. Avoid recycling stories that have already appeared in the daily newspaper;

4. Assign local reporters to each zone;

5. Provide more news space and in-depth reporting of each of the four distinct communities;

6. Include more coverage on safety, crime prevention, road construction, local sports (i.e. kids, youth leagues and high schools), PTA, education, local elections, business, philanthropy, and real estate transactions;

7. Include more entertainment information;

8. Write stories on local people;

9. Provide more balance between good and bad news.

Being a Better *Neighbor*

Based on the insights garnered from these various focus groups, the editors of the newspaper decided to direct attention to their local news effort first. It was determined that by restructuring the *Neighbors* publication, readers could receive expanded, more localized news that was relevant to the various geographic zones. This was only part of an overall expansion effort involving the entire newspaper. Over the course of one year, the newspaper expected to increase all major coverage areas, including entertainment, lifestyle, sports, business and national and state news.

While the paper determined a reorganization was needed to include a fourth geographic suburb, it was also decided to add reporters and editors to the suburban staff. Actual suburban news bureaus were created and staffed in each zone. The four *Neighbors* publications grew from approximately 24 pages to 44 pages weekly. During the introductory weeks, the tabloids were as large as 68 pages and even today, more than a year later, some weekly *Neighbors* are 52 pages.

Overall, the Syracuse Newspapers improved the *Neighbors* tabloid and by individualizing the publication by geographic areas, improved the newspapers suburban news coverage.

As a means of comparison, the tabloid was analyzed for content and design prior to the changes, and for three months proceeding the changes, each issue was analyzed in this context. Specific changes that were implemented based on reader's recommendations are identified below. Additionally, an examination and application of the theory presented earlier in this discussion is used to analyze whether strategies of "new journalism/market-driven/reader-friendly journalism were employed to help improve the *Neighbors* section.

• Comprehensive tabling and graphs of information were designed to make information more accessible and understandable, such as individual statistics on every varsity sport of every high school in the geographic zone. The *Neighbors* sections also offered a map showing major crime incidents in the area. While police blotters continued to be listed, additional lists of votes from town, village and school board meetings were included within the various zones. Making

information more accessible directly supports one of the strategies Sharon advocates to resuscitate newspapers. Here, the editors, like Sharon recommends, made the newspaper more "reader-friendly by making it more accessible for time-constrained readers.

• Photos of staff reporters and editors were added, along with the phone numbers where each could be reached. When the newspaper opened suburban bureaus, the paper ran letters from the editors of each zone inviting readers to send news to them or drop by the bureaus. As each bureau opened in the four suburban areas, area residents were invited to visit the new facilities. This allowed the newspaper to connect and begin to develop stronger relationships with the local community which Winter (1992) deemed a key strategy where strong relationships need to be forged between individual newsrooms, in this case, newly created ones, and the communities they are trying to reflect.

• The presentation of the news was reorganized and the major stories indexed on the front of the *Neighbors* for easy access and use. An expanded table of contents was added to the front page to clearly identify and categorize the various sections within the books.

• Clearly marked categories were used again making the publication more "reader-friendly". Furthermore, the categories identified the key items the readers had deemed important - news, schools, crime and safety, sports, business and neighborhoods.

• Emphasis on each individual community in terms of coverage. Community coverage was unique to each zone, with no overlap of news content allowed. Providing relevant in-depth coverage allows the newspaper to connect with the readers (Caughey, 1994).

• Changed many boundaries of coverage to reflect school district lines because of interest in school taxes and perceived strong loyalties of parents, students and graduates. Traditionally, the zones in the county were divided among governmental lines. Shifting emphasis directly from a traditional bureaucratic view of coverage to a more consumer-oriented approach employs the strategies previously described (Winter, 1992).

• Provided more news about the people related issues of government, schools and local happenings. As discussed earlier, this takes the process out of the bureaucracy in which it works and focuses on the key people issues that readers can relate to (Caughey, 1994).

• Provided expanded listings of various types of information and events that were occurring in their areas of the county. This included specific programs at recreation centers, schools, and senior centers.

In addition, the newspaper restructured its reporting staff, assigning more reporters and editors to the suburban and *Neighbors* area. Prior to the merger, the morning paper assigned six reporters and the afternoon paper assigned three reporters to the suburban desk; following the merger, all nine reporters kept their assignments. After the final restructuring, 19 reporters worked for the suburban desk and in the news bureaus. The paper also assigned 10 editors and an assistant managing editor to oversee the coverage and production of the four weekly sections. As identified in the strategies earlier, quality and quantity of staffing is key in making the content more readable, accessible and relevant.

Finally, the editors saw so much value in the opinions of the readers, the *Neighbors* publication has developed ways for readers to participate. The editors encourage readers to submit photographs, columns, articles and letters for publication. This is a very powerful means of staying connected to the people of the communities, which the *Neighbors* is trying to reflect.

Conclusion

A year after the restructuring of *Neighbors*, the Syracuse Newspapers have witnessed some immediate results. Part-run advertising has increased. Although, specific figures cannot be revealed because of proprietary information, lineage counts comparisons of certain issues has shown a strong 15% increase in advertising space. Because of this solid advertising support, the expanded page volume of the tabloid has remained steady.

Advertisers and account executives appear pleased with the new *Neighbors* tabloid. In general, those who sell advertising for the *Neighbors* believe it delivers on its promise and adds

credibility to local advertising. Advertisers are responding to the niche target markets available via the *Neighbors*.

And at a time when newspaper circulation in general is either flat or in decline, the new *Neighbors* has helped. On Thursday, which is the publication day of *Neighbors*, sales of The Post-Standard have increased.

While reader response to the new *Neighbors* tabloid continues to be very positive, perhaps the most significant impact of *Neighbors* is on the neighborhoods it serves. In just a year, the assistant managing editor of suburban news has seen his journalists rally to the formidable task of putting out an entirely new product as requested by the readership, to bring about positive and expanded news coverage in the suburban communities. The assistant managing editor had this to say about the his hardworking staff and the influence that *Neighbors* is having in the suburbs:

> **"I'm proud of the journalists. They now know their beats, so they are developing stories that have an edge. They're not just reporting on events, they are taking on issues that can lead to community change."**

The newspaper has invested in the communities within their ADI as a means to develop stronger relationships with these neighborhoods and to deliver the most credible, relevant news product to its readers. The readers have a vested interest because the newspaper listened. So, the improvement in *Neighbors* seems a success on several fronts.

While this is only one instance of a newspaper meeting the changes and challenges of the industry, there is something to be learned from this case, which is the ultimate goal of all case study research. Research was used to provide a more comprehensive understanding of what issues were important to the readers, as well as providing a benchmark for implementing any change. Secondly, it shows that the Syracuse Newspapers were willing to change -- to take the steps necessary to stop the erosion in readership and follow the direction set forth by their own readers. Finally, the process that the Syracuse Newspapers employed provides a guide for other newspapers who may face similar situations. While it is recognized that this study would have varying results with other cases, it is the process that one newspaper undertook to work towards a solution of a common industry problem that is the greatest benefit of this study. Furthermore, this

exploration was undertaken to test these new strategies in the field. As Stake (1995) posits, the utility of the case study is in the extension of the experience and greater understanding of the situation. And as a result, this case study serves to illustrate some important strategic steps other newspapers may use to confront the challenges of dwindling readership, growing competition and intensified financial pressures -- all conditions of a demanding and evolving marketplace.

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CIVIC JOURNALISM AND COMMUNITY POLICING: POTENTIAL FOR PARTNERSHIP

Abstract

The reform movements of civic journalism and community policing are intended to replace or substantially modify entrenched models of media practice and law enforcement. However, no academic research has been completed on the theoretical or empirical connections and interactions between community policing and civic journalism models. Civic journalism, despite its own liabilities, may provide a way to address specific policing concerns about protecting individual rights and establishing community norms.

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Introduction

In recent years, two public institutions–the police and the press–have been independently subjected to serious attempts at reform. These reforms–community policing and civic journalism–are intended to replace or substantially modify the models of law enforcement and media practice that have been in place for decades. The community policing model, however, is vulnerable to criticism in at least two broad areas. First, it assumes that public consensus can and will be reached on the standards of behavior that should be enforced in shared urban spaces; and second; it gives police wide discretion in enforcing those standards. This paper argues that the civic journalism model of media practice, despite its own liabilities, may provide a way for these specific concerns about community policing to be addressed and mitigated.

These new models require careful consideration on at least two levels. One level of criticism can be directed at the legitimacy of each model itself, i.e., whether its intrinsic features justify or warrant attempts at its implementation. A second level of criticism can address the effects of such experimentation and suggest modifications to mitigate unacceptable consequences. Without diminishing the importance of the first level and acknowledging that these two levels of criticism overlap, this paper will concentrate on the latter for a pragmatic reason: Experimentation with both models is well under way independently in a number of cities throughout the United States and concurrently in a few.[1]

To date, however, no academic research has been completed on the theoretical or empirical connections and interactions between community policing and civic journalism models. Therefore, it may be useful to consider models of community policing and civic journalism together for the following reasons as well: First, each new

[1] Among these communities are Charlotte, North Carolina; Norfolk, Virginia; San Francisco, California; Seattle, Washington; and Madison, Wisconsin.

model envisions an active, involved and empowered public; second, each of these models risks marginalizing some groups of people; and third, each assumes that an empowered public can make moral and legally defensible decisions based on a set of agreed-upon community standards and shared values. This paper is intended as an initial foray into unexplored territory, to provoke thoughtful debate, and to suggest directions for subsequent research.

This paper is divided into three parts. In Part I, an overview of the community policing model is offered, followed by a discussion of the criticism it has attracted. Part II explains civic journalism (also called public journalism), explores its liabilities, and points out its similarity and applicability to community policing programs. Part III concludes with the argument that civic journalism may be able to provide a missing but crucial component of the community policing model.

Part I: Community Policing

The Community Policing Model: An Overview

The community policing model has attracted increased public attention since the publication in 1996 of Fixing Broken Windows by George L. Kelling and Catherine M. Coles (see, for example, Cousins, 1998; Davies, 1996; Dionne, 1997; Galston, 1997; Lardner, 1997; Rosen, G., 1996; Siegel, 1997; Skogan, 1997). Derived in part from a 1982 article in The Atlantic Monthly by James Q. Wilson and George Kelling and subsequently expanded by the authors seven years later (Wilson & Kelling, 1989), the "broken windows" theory laid out by Kelling and Coles says that disorder, fear, crime, and urban decay are inexorably–and linearly–linked. An unrepaired broken window, the proponents reason, tells people that no one cares about it, much less how or why it was broken to begin with, and that no one is in charge of fixing it. Other broken windows soon follow; buildings, streets, and entire neighborhoods may then collapse. Unrestrained disorderly behavior, they argue, is the first step in a similar pattern of deterioration in public life (Kelling & Coles, 1996, p. 20). Community policing programs are therefore intended to restore and maintain public order as the first step toward alleviating fear, reducing crime, and revitalizing public life.

Kelling and Coles proposed their community policing model as an antidote to the so-called professional model of policing (1996, p. 79). This model, emerging out of the police reforms of the 1940s and 1950s, includes the idea that because the police were vulnerable to corrupting influences, they should be "sequestered in cars and isolated, not just from politicians, but from all citizens" (Kelling & Coles, 1996, p. 79). In addition, by the 1960s, the professional model required demand for police services to be channeled through an impersonal "911" emergency telephone system, enhancing the idea that police were removed from the community and could be summoned only to fight crimes that had already been committed. Thus, evaluations of the success of the model were based on arrest rates, response times, and the movement of crime rates (Kelling & Coles, 1996, p. 80). In this model, citizens' roles were clearly defined:

> [Citizens] were to support police, act as their eyes and ears, stay out of the way when police arrived, testify in court, and essentially act as passive recipients of crime fighting services. Citizen influence over, or involvement in, policing activities was seen as political encroachment into the professional domain. (Kelling & Coles, 1996, p. 80)

In contrast, the community policing model builds on the work of Jane Jacobs, who argued that

> the public peace–the sidewalk and street peace–of cities is not kept primarily by the police, necessary as police are. It is kept primarily by an intricate, almost unconscious, network of voluntary controls and standards among the people themselves, and enforced by the people themselves. . . . No amount of police can enforce civilization where the normal, casual enforcement of it has broken down. (1961, 1993, p. 40)

Jacobs (1961/1993) points out that urban dwellers must subscribe to a common code of behavior that essentially allows strangers to live together on the fine line between private and public mores. Kelling and Coles expand on Jacobs' thesis in the following passage:

> Order arises out of what Jane Jacobs has called the "small change" of urban life: the day-to-day respect with which we deal with others and the concern that we exercise for their privacy, welfare, and safety. Such respect and concern

> does not divide rich from poor, black from white, or one ethnic group from another. Instead, it unites diverse neighborhoods against those who behave in outrageous ways, and who prey on the weak and vulnerable. Police and criminal justice agencies in a democratic society should be part and parcel of such communities–the citizens as police and police as citizens . . . both encouraging tolerances for differences and supporting citizen efforts to control the unruly and predators. (1996, p. 9)

In contrast to the idea of "public peace" described above, disorder, as Kelling and Coles define it, comprises "incivility, boorish and threatening behavior that disturbs life, especially urban life" (1996, p. 14). The theory behind fixing broken windows relies, in part, on the establishment and recognition of community standards for acceptable public behavior, that is, behavior that is civil and non-threatening. To enjoy–or to at least endure–urban life, "citizens need minimum levels of order" (Kelling & Coles, 1996, p. 14). There is some evidence that citizens generally agree on the desirable level of order in their neighborhoods. As noted by Kelling and Coles, empirical research by Skogan (1990) found that "regardless of ethnicity, class, or other characteristics, residents within a community or neighborhood generally concurred about what constituted disorder and how much disorder was present locally" (Kelling & Coles, 1996, p. 25).[2]

Kelling and Coles do not claim that order maintenance will rectify the social inequalities reflected in diverse neighborhoods populated by people of varying status, class, and race. "We have the same concerns about homelessness, poverty, and social injustice as do the vast majority of the population," they write, adding that "we wish opportunity to be equitably distributed, and we want to ensure that persons

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[2] One of the challenges of this discussion is that the definition of disorder is both contested and fluid. As early as 1968, James Q. Wilson pointed out that when the definition of order is left to police, the result can be racial and class discrimination (Skogan, 1990, p. 15). Wilson and Kelling (1982), in describing the evolution of policing, note that historically, the police officer's "objective was order, an inherently ambiguous term but a condition that people in a given community recognized when they saw it" (p. 34). Skogan's (1990) research defined disorder to include vandalism, drug dealing, street harassment, physical decay of buildings, public drinking, noise, litter, trash, and prostitution in residential areas (p. 191). The definition of disorder is further complicated by the fact that some activities are considered appropriate at some times and places and not at others. In this paper, following Kelling and Coles, the term disorder can be interpreted to mean "incivility, boorish and threatening behavior."

seeking adequate jobs and homes are able to have them" (1996, p. 64). They continue: "To advocate for the rights of [homeless, mentally ill, alcoholic, and drug-addicted] individuals . . . often means that nothing is done to address the cause for their being where they are. . . . We are far from having exhausted attempts to develop more satisfactory and productive means of providing for and treating their specific needs" (1996, pp. 67-68).

Kelling and Coles also argue, however, that "addressing the root causes of crime, whatever they may be, need not be the only way of reducing crime itself" (1996, p. 155). A key component of the Kelling and Coles argument is their insistence that status (e.g., homelessness) and disorderly behavior (e.g., loitering, panhandling, public intoxication, or public urination) can be decoupled both morally and legally (1996, p. 40). "The problem [of disorder]," they contend, "is not the condition of being homeless or poor; it is the *behavior* of many persons, some homeless but others not, who violate the laws of the city and state" [emphasis in the original] (1996, p. 40). As they point out, however, efforts to control disorder have been met with successful legal claims that ordinances such as anti-loitering rules punish homeless people for their status and that anti-begging laws deprive a class of people of their rights to free expression. Kelling and Coles argue that the courts often "have gone too far" in decisions that strike down order maintenance ordinances on the grounds that they are directed at a class of citizens, i.e., the poor or homeless (1996, p. 50).

Thus, the blueprint for restoring order and reducing crime in communities, say Kelling and Coles, is a police strategy that helps create the conditions in neighborhoods that allow other institutions–such as family, churches, businesses, community groups, and government agencies–to deal with the root causes of crime (1996, p. 155). Such a strategy is based on the "assumption that dealing with crime can assist society in achieving if not social justice, at least the preconditions under which it can be developed" (1996, p. 162). Kelling and Coles summarize the order maintenance elements of the community policing model as follows: "addressing disorder through a comprehensive community-wide problem-solving effort, forcing a change in the behavior of wannabes away from disorderly acts, increased police

contact with and control over perpetrators of index crimes, and causing citizens to accept a greater role in order maintenance" (1996, p. 253).

Police Discretion

Order maintenance, as envisioned in this model, requires police officers on the street to exercise their discretion. Whether they can be trusted to do so "equitably, justly, and in way that preserve the public peace" is an acknowledged concern: "While it does not have to, order-maintenance policing can enforce a tyranny of the majority, a repression of minority or marginal elements within the community" by devolving more authority to patrol officers (Kelling & Coles, 1996, p. 164).

Community policing proponents argue, however, that discretion is and always has been routinely exercised at all levels of the justice system, albeit somewhat constrained or directed by external controls, e.g., the courts and lawmaking bodies, and circumscribed by internal controls, e.g., departmental policies and training (Kelling & Coles, 1996, pp. 175-188). To these controls, Kelling and Coles would add written guidelines developed in partnership with citizens. Such guidelines would reflect not only that there was a negotiated "consensus about the nature of neighborhood problems and what is to be done about them" but also that "citizens and police [agreed on] yardsticks to measure their mutual performance" (1996, p. 188). The management of police discretion is a serious problem, Kelling and Coles acknowledge, but one that can be addressed by creating a "contract between police and citizens, strengthening police accountability to the community they police and incorporating the legal bases for their actions" (1996, p. 193).

Involving the public

Kelling and Coles insist that the public must be "inclusive of all racial, ethnic, religious, and economic groups" (1996, p. 234) and fully engaged in the process of community policing, from the setting of community standards to managing discretionary police behavior. As a result, community policing will not look the same in every community, since "individual communities or even districts within cities will emphasize different elements to reflect discrete local needs, traditions, and values" (1996, p. 158).

Kelling and Coles note that "public participation in policy making has been a lost thread in police innovation over the last decades" (1996, p. 192). Skogan also had pointed out that "the creation of mechanisms to ensure formal police accountability to the public has not been part of the current discussion surrounding community policing" (1990, p. 123). Skogan says that in community policing models, the police are expected to be responsive to public input, rather than responsible to the public in a formal, legally binding sense.[3] However, he notes, attempts to engineer community organizations that could fulfill the role envisioned for the public have not been particularly successful.[4]

This important piece of the community policing model–the public's role– can be supplied by civic journalism, an argument that will be developed further following the next section in order to respond to other criticism as well.

Criticism of the Community Policing Model

This section of Part I reviews and comments on published criticism of the community policing model as well as offering a new analysis of its public participation component.

Popular and academic response. The community policing model has been developing for nearly two decades; Fixing Broken Windows (Kelling & Coles, 1996) served not only as its most evolved description but also as a vehicle to address earlier criticism and to report on the successes and failures of the model as implemented in cities such as New York, Baltimore, San Francisco, and Seattle (pp. 108-156, 194-235). Perhaps because of the strong empirical evidence of success provided in the book (i.e., the dramatic account in Chapter 4 of restored order and crime reduction in New York City's subway system), scholarly and popular reaction to the community policing model has been somewhat limited to critical book reviews. Such reviews have been generally positive. For example, Galston (1997) applauds community policing as a way to restore urban order without waiting for all social ills to be cured, an assessment that echoes Dionne (1996). Others (Skogan, 1997; "Thoughts," 1997)

[3] Skogan's exemplar of formal control is the Black Panther Party proposal of the 1960s that called for direct, public input into police administration (p. 124).

emphasize the necessity of community involvement to monitor the use of discretionary power wielded by police. G. Rosen (1996) argues that community policing approaches may well forestall the imposition of harsher measures of crime control that carry even greater threats to personal liberty.

Legal responses. However, the tension inherent in the community policing model between individual liberty interests and the public interest in controlling disorder has attracted the close and continuing attention of legal scholars.[5] Two recent legal attacks have centered on issues of race and status. In the first, Stewart (1998) argues that subtle racism is embedded in the "fixing broken windows" policy prescriptions; he uses the aversive racism theory to explain how. Stewart says aversive racism theory predicts that discussions of crime reduction programs in minority communities are strategically designed to frame problems as race-blind while concealing their deeply racial consequences. He argues that aversive racism pervades the work of both Wilson and Kelling, who, he charges, have failed to acknowledge the harm to minority communities that could result from the broad discretionary powers given to police in community policing plans. The subtlety of the racism embedded in the Wilson and Kelling model, Stewart contends, does not mitigate the impact of its implementation. Stewart concludes that framing the issue of urban disorder in "quality of life" terms rather than in racial terms, and simply asserting that police need better training and supervision, is Wilson and Kelling's strategy to deflect charges of racism.

This interesting and provocative argument, however, loses some of its authority because it does not consider the more fully developed, explained and defended model of community policing outlined in Kelling and Coles' 1996 book. Stewart pins his argument on the 1982 article by Wilson and Kelling published in The Atlantic Monthly and fails to reference any of the empirical evidence or refined practices of community policing that have emerged in the subsequent 14 years. Stewart's

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[4] Skogan's empirical evidence for this assertion comes from evaluations of such efforts in Chicago and Minneapolis and is discussed at length in Chapter 6, pp. 125-157.

[5] It is beyond the scope of this paper to consider the considerable body of legal arguments over the general principles of controlling police power and safeguarding individual liberty. Therefore, this

argument that community policing is inherently racist because of its consequences would carry more weight if he had examined and reported the actual consequences of such programs. Additionally, Stewart fails to take into account the more fully defined and encouraged role of the public as monitors of police activity, an aspect of the 1996 model of community policing that might mitigate some of his concerns.

Munzer (1997) mounts a slightly different attack on community policing by concentrating on the interests it represents and the impact of wide police discretion on those whose interests are not represented. This kind of systematic bias, Munzer contends, occurs when disorder is defined by people such as business owners and office workers, excluding the interests of street people. If the norms of urban order do not reflect all interests, Munzer concludes, their imposition via discretionary policing will be biased, regardless of the good intentions of the police in enforcing them.

Other legal scholars are more supportive of Kelling and Coles' model. For example, Ellickson (1996) says the first and best method of maintaining public order is to allow well-trained police officers to use their discretion in enforcing community standards.[6] He argues that rules of street behavior are imperative to allow the majority of citizens to enjoy the use of public spaces and asserts that norms of street order cross race and class lines, arising out of internalized rules of proper conduct instilled by parents, teachers and religious leaders. Ellickson also contends, following Kelling and Coles (1996), that there is a distinction between status and behavior and that there is universal agreement that all people are entitled to enter public places and make use of public facilities, as long as they behave themselves. Overemphasis on the rights of panhandlers and squatters, Ellickson argues, ignores the interests of other street users, such as the poor, the elderly and women. In his final analysis, however, Ellickson has little confidence that even education of police officers on the finer points of constitutional law, racial integration of police forces, and community policing

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discussion is confined to legal scholars who have specifically addressed the community policing model developed by Wilson, Kelling and Coles.

[6] Ellickson's second solution uses a land use approach by suggesting public space zoning that would allow some street activities, e.g., panhandling and bench squatting, in specific areas, an idea that apparently generated little enthusiasm.

approaches would assuage the concerns of those who worry about the abuse of police discretion.

More support is provided by Teir (1998) and Garland (1998). Teir (1998) argues that quality-of-life measures, such as those that regulate panhandling and urban camping, are constitutional, beneficial, and fair because they are aimed at conduct rather than status. Teir contends, in fact, that the poor and middle classes actually benefit more than the upper classes from measures to control public disorder because the former's options for housing, schools, shopping, and recreation are limited to their neighborhoods. Garland (1998) supports Kelling and Coles' (1996) contention that the professional, 911 policing style of the 1970s and 1980s did little to contain rising crime rates. Community policing strategies of the last decade have been associated with decreases in homicides and general crime rates, Garland (1998) says, which suggests that low-level crime control might be instrumental in preventing more serious crimes.

Livingston (1997), however, provides not only a legal argument for the validation of laws aimed at curbing disorderly behavior but also calls for community-police interaction as a way to ensure that police discretion is used as the community wishes it to be. Her legal argument concludes that existing case law does not preclude the constitutionality of public order laws when such laws are not facially aimed at excluding some people, such as minorities or the poor, from their protection. Restraints on the exercise of police discretion are nonetheless required, Livingston argues, but those restraints can be provided by institutions other than the courts. Those restraints need to be generated by political controls through neighborhood involvement in guiding and monitoring police services, Livingston says, suggesting that mayors, city councils, citizen review boards, and the like could provide the needed corrective when police authority is exercised inappropriately. Livingston did not, however, envision a role for community organizations or the media in monitoring police activity.

Foscarinis (1996) makes another argument altogether. She says that the polarized debate over the rights of the general public versus the rights of those who live on the street, and therefore engage in behaviors that might be construed as disorderly, is nonproductive. Instead, her argument is premised on the notion that everyone has an interest in maintaining public order and that no one chooses to live

on the street. Foscarinis contends that activism and debate should be focused on relieving homelessness itself and that until the condition of homelessness is alleviated, regulation of the behavior inevitably provoked by homelessness is essentially aimed at status. She calls for cities to find ways to forge a consensus among their citizens to support solutions such as affordable housing, jobs and job training, and social services. While Kelling and Coles (1996) agree with Foscarinis that structural solutions are needed to address the social problems that create disorder and crime, they argue that immediate action to reclaim public spaces is also needed to help create the conditions under which social programs can be successful. Public participation is a cornerstone of both approaches.

The public participation component. Kelling and Coles repeatedly invoke the need for citizen involvement by declaring that community policing goals should be "developed under public scrutiny" (1996, p. 160); by characterizing the New York City subway project as emerging out of a "new urban consensus" (1996, p. 110); and by exhorting police departments to "engage the public fully in your deliberations; provide channels for and seek feedback; be prepared and willing to change directions" (1996, p. 225). Despite the centrality of the public participation component in the community policing model, however, they do not specify the form that such public engagement should take. The authors, in fact, acknowledge that the police-public partnership is undertheorized: "The precise nature of this partnership and the processes by which it is formed and a consensus evolved within the community need a great deal of study, for we know little about them now" (Kelling & Coles, 1996, p. 168).

However, the evidence supplied by Kelling and Coles' (1996) own recounting of community policing programs suggests that in practice, the "public" tends to mean established legal, business, and community groups. For example, various community policing projects in New York City and elsewhere involved the New York Civil Liberties Union, the New York City Council, the Grand Central Business Improvement District, the Bryant Park Restoration Corporation, the Citizens Committee for New York City, the American Alliance for Rights and Responsibilities, the (Baltimore) Mayor's Coordinating Council on Criminal Justice, and the Downtown Partnership of Baltimore.

It is not at all clear that the voices of "all racial, ethnic, religious, and economic groups" (Kelling & Coles, 1996, p. 234) are represented in organizations such as these.

The point at which public involvement, in practice, becomes part of a community policing plan is also unclear from the evidence provided by Kelling and Coles (1996). For example, in New York City's subway-crime strategy, the public was informed after the basic plan was developed; the planners, led by police officials, first agreed on a set of messages that would frame the subway crime problem by the "broken windows" philosophy, i.e., linking disorder to crime and decoupling behavior and status, and then informed the public of them via the media (Kelling & Coles, 1996, p. 124, 226). In that case, a public relations effort appeared to be substituted for public involvement in any kind of deliberative sense. In other cities, public involvement may have precipitated police attention, but the timelines for partnership development appear to vary widely (see, for example, Kelling and Coles, 1996, Chapter 6).

Undoubtedly, other thoughtful and important criticisms can be directed at the community policing model. The foregoing review has focused, however, on concerns that might be alleviated if community policing projects were undertaken in conjunction with the practice of civic journalism. Part II argues that the philosophy and practice of civic journalism could make that so.

Part II: Civic Journalism

Civic Journalism: An Overview

Civic journalism is based on the premise that journalists are uniquely positioned and morally obligated to help civic life[7] go well, situating this new model of media practice where it not only could complement the aims of community policing programs but also could provide a check on their potential abuses. Civic journalists see ordinary citizens as perfectly capable of good decision-making; these journalists understand their roles as facilitators of dialogue among various and diverse segments

[7] To avoid confusion, the term public life is used in this paper to describe the everyday, urban interaction of people using common public spaces. The term civic life is reserved more particularly for political

of the population, across race and class lines, among public and private organizations. They try, sometimes more successfully than others, to contextualize information, to open avenues for discussion, to connect people and policy makers and institutions in ways that facilitate problem-solving.

Problems of crime and urban decay contributed to the general feeling among some journalists and academics in the late 1980s and early 1990s that their profession–and the democratic process–was in trouble. These journalists "saw that the very problems they had come to journalism to help solve still weren't being solved, or even being very intelligently addressed. Inner cities continued to decay, deficits to grow, schools to flounder; city hall and statehouse policies were as unfocused as ever" (Charity, 1995, p. 1). The responses of editors and reporters in diverse cities coalesced into one basic premise: "Journalism ought to make it as easy as possible for citizens to make intelligent decisions about public affairs, and to get them carried out" (Charity, 1995, p. 2). This is the role, in fact, that the community policing model envisions for the public.

Philosophical Roots

Barber (1984) and Yankelovich (1991) provided much of the philosophical basis for the civic journalism model. They see the key to reinvigorating democracy in a reconceptualization of the natural status of citizenship, contending that people must be educated for citizenship and civic participation. However, as Barber (1984) points out, formal pedagogy–although necessary–is the least useful approach to civic education; knowledge and the quest for knowledge, he says, tend to follow rather than precede political involvement. "Give people some significant power and they will quickly appreciate the need for knowledge," Barber says, "but foist knowledge on them without giving them responsibility and they will display only indifference" (1984, p. 234).

Barber suggests that the public can acquire political wisdom in the same way it is acquired by statesmen and politicians. Experience confers wisdom, he contends, and if experience educates politicians, it can do the same for citizens. All that is needed, he argues, is the transfer of power to the members of the public: "To rule well

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interaction, i.e., informal discourse among citizens in public or private places, formal participation in public debate, and other forms of the democratic exercise of their citizenship.

they need first to rule; to exercise responsibility prudently they must be given responsibility" (1984, p. 237).

Civic journalists have arrived at the same conclusion, with some additional insights. "The truth is that American society doesn't make it easy for busy people to be good citizens. . . . Public journalists are simply those people who began to look for opportunities to make citizenship easier through the specific powers of the press" (Charity, 1996a, p. 7-8).

In other words, civic journalists have defined themselves as those willing to help reconstitute and empower the public:

> In effect, public journalism would add the duty of public involvement to the traditional responsibilities of the press, e.g., surveillance, agenda-setting, watchdog. The philosophy as applied would have a news medium purposefully organize its resources and activities to educate and interest people in the public sphere. (Denton, Thorson, & Coyle, 1995, p. 3)

And civic journalists further define that role as promoting process, not solutions. Charity calls it civic journalism's "golden rule": "Journalism should advocate democracy without advocating particular solutions" (1995, p. 146). Merritt adds: "Public journalism is a search for ways that journalism can serve a purpose beyond . . . merely telling the news. That purpose is reinvigorating [civic] life by re-engaging people in it" (1995, p. 262).

Yankelovich outlines three stages of public deliberation that have been accepted as the basic blueprint for most civic journalism projects: consciousness-raising about an issue; working through the problem in a deliberative dialogue; and finally, resolving the problem in full recognition and acceptance of the solution's compromises and deficiencies (1991, pp. 63-65). These steps complement the problem-solving approach to community policing as laid out by Kelling and Coles (1996, pp. 225-227).

The Objectivity Problem

The methods employed to carry out this new mission for the media vary widely: Some newspapers have convened public forums to discuss neighborhood crime or race discrimination; others poll voters to determine what political issues should be

covered in campaign stories; still others dedicate newspaper space for wide-ranging discussions of public problems such as Friday night cruisers in neighborhood parks. In some cases, newspapers have literally introduced neighbors to one another in local forums (Schaffer & Miller, 1995). Critics attack many of these attempts on the grounds that the journalists are abandoning their traditional professional norms of detachment and objectivity. For example, Gartner argues that "newspapers are supposed to explain the community, not convene it" and that "news reporters are supposed to explore the issues, not solve them" (1995, p. 68). Such norms are a direct product of the kind of Enlightenment thinking that generated libertarian idealism and exalted scientific method (Meyer, 1996). To resist the pressures of those who wanted to influence the press, "we have created social, moral and ideological barriers that define news people as a race apart, distant, detached and uninfluenced by anything but a dogged desire to discover and impart the truth regardless of its consequences" (Meyer, 1996, p. 4).

The professionalization of journalism accelerated in the early 1900s with the formation of professional organizations and the adoption of codes of ethics that emphasized objectivity. In general, as J. Rosen (1991) points out, this professionalization

> narrows [political] discussion to questions of technique . . . that can be approached with detached realism. . . . It transforms the newspaper from a political message addressed from citizen to citizen . . . into an authoritative account of the state of the world, addressed to an audience whose own role in that world normally is not at issue. (Hallin, 1985, p. 140)

Public journalists respond to the objectivity problem by pointing out that they see themselves as privileged to attend full time to citizenship and that with that privilege comes the responsibility to share their expertise with their fellow citizens:

> To acknowledge a political "identity" as a public journalist is to agree that you have a stake in public life–that you are a member of the community, and not a mechanism outside it. This does not mean that the press can become a partisan or advocate. But neither is it to withdraw into a stance of civic exile, where

> what's happening to the community somehow isn't happening to you as a professional. (J. Rosen, 1995, p. 38)

Meyer (1995) argues, moreover, that journalists should gauge their objectivity based on their newsgathering methods, i.e., the collective balance, fairness, depth and breadth of the information on which their stories are based, rather than on criteria that rests on the number of lines of type given to each side in a debate. Thus a paradigm shift toward civic journalism is also identified by its inclusive methodology. This allows the model to be used not only for special projects, such as election coverage, but for the regular reporting that also could be used, for example, to keep communication flowing among all parties with a stake in a community policing program.

Other Criticisms

Some have also criticized this new model of media practice as simply a marketing tool. "Too much of what's called public journalism appears to be what our promotion department does, only with a different kind of name and a fancy, evangelistic fervor," according to Washington Post executive editor Leonard Downie (as quoted in Case, 1994). Other critics argue that civic journalism is "anti-democratic–an attempt to increase the power of a journalistic upper class to dictate what are and are not fit subjects for public debate" (Kelly, 1996, p. 48). These criticisms parallel those leveled at community policing, that is, civic journalism too is simply a public relations ploy and attempts to foist elite values on the lower classes.

To charges of marketing gimmickry, civic journalists reply that a healthy democracy requires a healthy press, i.e., one that can stay in business. The goal of this new model of media practice is to attract a broader audience, and the complementary measures of success are increased civic participation and increased circulation. Aucoin suggests that "the idea that the mass media had a duty to report beyond superficial handouts . . . even if for no other reason than that it made economic sense" (1995, p. 8) is not at all new. The media have always been in the business of making money, even when the early partisan papers were heavily subsidized by political parties. Civic journalism advocates argue that the tension between the goals of profit and public duty is historic and ongoing and one goal does not require the other to be forgone.

To charges that civic journalism is anti-democratic might be added the charge that it is a pragmatic middle-class solution to a pragmatic middle-class analysis of the crisis of democracy. Proponents, however, have included in their model of civic journalism a set of practices that ideally would be inclusive of all classes. Even so, critics rightfully worry that community consensus–the end result of Yankelovich's (1991) process of coming to public judgment–may reflect patently immoral reasoning or conclusions. For these critics, simple faith in the inherent good will of most people is not enough. Yankelovich is committed to the idea that the process of deliberation is of prime importance; that is, good outcomes will likely be produced by good process. Fishkin (1991), however, offers some more pragmatic guidelines in the tricky business of assessing the quality of public judgment.

For a public decision to carry moral authority, Fishkin (1991) says, it must have been produced under certain conditions. First, participants must have true and assured political equality; second, all must be protected from tyranny, including the tyranny of the majority; and finally, there must have been an opportunity for free and full deliberation, modeled on the Habermasian concept of ideal speech and unfettered by arbitrary time constraints. Such criteria may not produce optimal decisions, Fishkin (1991) concludes, but they do help guard against those decisions that are blatantly wrong.

Community policing and civic journalism, dependent as they are on public deliberation, consensus and support, are certainly vulnerable to bad decision-making; but they are among the few alternatives that even provide a way for such a discussion to be undertaken, reviewed, and revised. A brief review of how some civic journalism experiments have been designed and implemented offers some insight into how similar efforts might be undertaken in conjunction with community policing programs.

Civic Journalism in Practice

In North Carolina, the Charlotte Observer launched a civic journalism project in 1993 called "Taking Back our Neighborhoods." Their goal was "to pinpoint–precisely–the sources of violent crime, and then challenge the community to pitch in and do something specifically about it" (Schaffer & Miller, 1995, p. 5). In partnership with a local television station, the newspaper conducted forums for residents of some of the

city's most crime-ridden neighborhoods; those forums produced not only specific lists of neighborhood needs and but also ways that residents throughout Charlotte could respond. Town meetings in inner-city neighborhoods attracted not only hundreds of residents but also prompted more than 700 groups and individuals to volunteer to meet various neighborhood needs. The media provided continuing coverage of the progress made by city officials and residents to meet their goals; the media spotlight was instrumental, for example, in getting dangerous vacant lots cleared and closing crack houses, two of the goals set by the residents themselves.

Other projects have also shown that community consensus can be achieved. For example, in Dayton, Ohio, more than 2,000 people participated in small neighborhood "pizza parties." Their charge was simply to talk about teen violence and send their comments to the Daily News to kick off its 1994 civic journalism project, "Kids in Chaos" (Charity, 1996). The citizens' ideas and concerns were published, panels of experts were convened to evaluate them, and 34 community forums were then held to help people define their bottom-line assessment of the problem. That turned out to be a general agreement that the problem wasn't "teens in chaos, it was families in chaos. . . . Hence the project . . . had a new title and emphasis: 'Fixing Our Families'" (Charity, 1996, p. 15).

This kind of widespread participation in civic journalism projects is not unusual. In Maine, about 1,200 people took part in study groups on education (Charity, 1996, p. 16); in Utah, a civic journalism project on transportation, land and water use reached about a half a million people, about a fourth of the state's population, and directly involved up to 900 people (Beaudry, 1996, p. 27). In California, a "Voice of the Voter" project was undertaken in 1994 by the San Francisco Chronicle and two broadcast partners (Schaffer & Miller, 1995). This core group worked with dozens of ethnic and foreign-language organizations and media outlets to increase their reach, producing some project materials, for example, in Spanish, Cantonese and Vietnamese. Several thousand Bay Area residents took part in election forums or responded to candidates via the media; nearly 40,000 citizens registered to vote using a registration form distributed as a newspaper insert (Schaffer & Miller, 1995, p. 38).

The power of the media to monitor official reaction to citizen ideas and demands is a crucial element of civic journalism. The high visibility of San Francisco's "Voice of the Voter" project essentially guaranteed the participation of politicians, holding them accountable for campaign promises to engage in a dialogue with voters. Continuing coverage in Charlotte of the "Taking Back our Neighborhoods" goals made public officials, as well as private volunteers, accountable for making good on their promises. In Dayton, public deliberation facilitated by the media changed the focus of community crime prevention efforts from kids to families. In Washington, the combined clout of The Seattle Times and two broadcast partners resulted in a debate between candidates for the U. S. Senate, an event that a number of other organizations, acting alone, had been unable to put together (Schaffer & Miller, 1995, p. 55).

At the same time, experienced civic journalists are aware that the power of special interest groups to push public deliberation in one direction or another is considerable. In Madison, Wisconsin, for example, media partners involved in the "We, the People" series of public forums acknowledge that as the forums become more institutionalized, "special interests figure out how to take advantage of you" (Schaffer & Miller, 1995, p. 21). In some cases, citizen participants have acquired minor celebrity status themselves, becoming, as one journalist puts it, "citizens with a capital C" (Schaffer & Miller, 1995, p. 36) and raising concerns that their participation somehow disconnects them from the average citizens they are supposed to represent. These difficult problems are not easily resolvable; but again, the very publicness of civic journalism means that its faults and failures are as visible as its successes, opening at least the possibility that those deficiencies can be spotted and corrected.

Part III: Civic Journalism and Community Policing

Civic journalism and community policing clearly share a philosophical foundation; in practice, these two reform movements can complement each other as well. As Charity points out, civic journalism is "only one part of a much larger story: the democratic renewal going on in a number of professions and communities all at once with only the roughest coordination, in which grassroots leaders and politicians,

business people, librarians, foundations and scholars (as well as journalists) are shaking off the dead skin of their old way of doing things and trying something new" (1996b, p. 23). Advocates of community policing are part of this democratic renewal, as evidenced by their stated desire to pick up the thread of community involvement that was lost when professionalism distanced police officers from other people.

Civic journalism arises out of a perception shared by citizens and the media that civic life needs revitalizing, much the same way that citizens and police agree that public life needs improvement. The challenge is to determine what kinds of changes in civic and public life should be made–and at what cost to competing values and rights. Civic journalism and community policing models also share the foundational belief that their professionals are empowered to work full time at jobs other citizens can only do part time. Kelling and Coles (1996) and Charity (1995) offer strikingly similar thoughts: "The police are unique members of the public in that they 'give full-time attention to duties which are incumbent on every citizen in the interest of community welfare'" (Kelling & Coles, 1996, p. 235); "[Journalists] have the privilege of occupying themselves with public affairs full time, whereas all other people, having limited time, money, and access, are forced to do their work as citizens in spare hours" (Charity, 1995, p. 12).

Just as Kelling and Coles (1996) point out that community policing in practice will reflect the character of its neighborhood, Charity (1995) says that civic journalism will vary from city to city. "Public journalism is (and virtually has to be) an invention of each newspaper that uses it," Charity says. "Just like every family invents its own way of talking, its own division of responsibilities, its own jargon, every community has to invent its own way of deliberating and taking action on its concerns" (1995, p. 14).

These philosophical similarities alone are enough to spark academic consideration of the interplay of these two models. But more important is the recognition that two serious and well-founded concerns about the community policing model can be addressed by a civic journalism approach to citizen involvement. First, community policing plans, in theory, are solidly planted in community consensus on standards for public behavior, but establishing that consensus, more often than not, seems to be left to informal encounters–or worse, to highly structured partnerships

among powerful organizations representing a relatively narrow band of political and business interests. Civic journalists make it their mission to engage a broad range of citizens and interests in a community dialogue; their failure to do so is immediately apparent and impossible to excuse.

Civic journalists have demonstrated their ability to engage large numbers of citizens in meaningful dialogue and decision-making and to resubmit those decisions to the public for further debate and revision. They are uniquely positioned to use their extraordinary power to bring their fellow citizens together to talk about tough problems and facilitate the search for solutions. Integrating the Yankelovich (1991) and Fishkin (1991) criteria for assessing the quality of such decisions can further strengthen the process.

The second broad category of serious concern about community policing is its reliance on the discretion of its officers, who are expected to match their daily order-maintenance decisions not only to the law but also to public preferences for its enforcement. This requires the kind of ongoing public scrutiny that only the media can offer. However, traditional, objective reporting is only able to point out problems, such as an investigative series on the abuse of police power; civic journalists can offer a venue–a public sphere–where competing interests can work toward solutions. For community policing to work equitably, respecting the rights of all members of the community, there needs to be a continuous community conversation about how it is working. The responsibility for keeping that conversation going should not be left to a few well-organized interest groups; civic journalists can reach beyond entrenched power structures to be truly inclusive of all citizens in a legitimate and open forum.

Community policing proponents and civic journalism practitioners are currently operating in some of the same communities. Scholars would do well to study their interaction and the effect it has on the implementation, successes, and failures of each model. In many places, experiments in community policing are under way without the benefit of a well-developed model of citizen involvement to follow. In the spirit of finding common ground, journalists and police should engage in a public dialogue to try to find a way to help broken-down communities repair themselves.

It would be naive to conclude that the goals implicit in the philosophies and models of community policing and civic journalism will never be tainted by self-interest, incompetence, evil intent, or plain poor judgment. And there is perhaps a leap of faith implied in any attempt to involve citizens in managing their own affairs, a leap made longer in this century by the general ceding of authority to the "professionals," whether they be police officers or journalists. But at its best, civic journalism holds great promise as both a complement to and a check on community policing, which in turn holds out hope that urban life of the future could be more often celebrated than simply endured. Restoring public order is not the only step but it is a necessary one toward achieving a society where both public and civic life can flourish, where individual rights are respected, and where social and economic inequities can be fully addressed.

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Following In Their First Steps:
A Lesson In Launching Public Journalism

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ABSTRACT

Following In Their First Steps:
A Lesson In Launching Public Journalism

Public journalists experimenting with ways to improve daily coverage have a greater challenge than their contemporaries who focused on "project" reporting. This case study examines the public journalism efforts of one newspaper, The State, in Columbia, South Carolina, to reconnect with readers and improve coverage. Results emphasize the importance of choosing a topic and for including reporters in decision-making from the beginning. A poorly conceived project and one that has little support from newsroom staff may actually harm rather than heal connections with readers.

Following In Their First Steps:
A Lesson In Launching Public Journalism

As the 1990s draw to a close, public journalism advocates face increasing need to bring legitimacy to the movement designed to improve media connections with citizens. The first stage of the movement examined ways to increase citizen involvement in communities and the efforts were designed as special reporting projects. The second stage of public journalism, designed to incorporate change into daily journalistic routine and coverage, examined how traditional journalism -- news values, use of some terms, use of sources, form, placement, newsgathering routines -- may actually have alienated some important groups in communities.

This case study examines the efforts of one newspaper, The State, in Columbia, SC, to incorporate changes into daily routine through public journalism techniques. The study explores specifically how the newspaper selected a topic for study and questions generally whether poorly designed efforts to implement change can actually cause more harm in newspaper-community relations.

The State's efforts were part of a broader experiment called "Project Reconnect," supported with funds by the Pew Center for Media Studies and the Knight Ridder Corp. Project Reconnect was the brainchild of the American Society of Newspaper Editors' Change Committee. The Change Committee formed in response to ASNE's Timeless Values Study to investigate ways that journalists could better understand and reflect the values of citizens in the communities they covered.

Communitarianism and Public Journalism

Public journalism challenges not only the traditional practice of journalism. It also calls into question libertarianism, the theoretical framework that has shaped American journalism since the colonies were

formed. Public journalists draw from communitarian theory, a framework that emphasizes individuals *in* communities. Because they view people not as solitary individuals, but as people in relationships with others, communitarians recognize the important role community institutions play in connecting citizens with one another. At the same time, communitarians who practice public journalism recognize that the well-being of the institution of newspapers is interconnected to the well-being of communities.

Individual autonomy characterizes the Libertarian theory of the press. The theory emphasizes freedom from government control and the ability of an informed citizenry to make rational decisions about self-governance through exposure to a marketplace of ideas generated by the press. Libertarianism, which traces its origins to the writings of Milton and Mill, implies that readers will recognize truth as it emerges in a clash with falsehood and that they will be able to resolve problems based on their knowledge of that truth. It serves as the dominant ethical framework for traditional journalists and helps shape not only what is news but also how news is gathered and presented. Increasingly, however, critics say individualism has led to individual alienation and a decline in public life.

Further, scholars recognize that Libertarian theory, evolved from the Enlightenment period and in response to an authoritarian government, presumes a perhaps outdated notion that information is in short supply. As the Twentieth Century draws to a close, some speculate that judgment about information, not access, is more relevant to maintenance of democracy and community life. How then, should newspapers respond? The Enlightenment period concept eventually gave way to a modified version of libertarianism called the Social Responsibility theory of the press, which served as the dominant framework for practicing journalists

in the late Twentieth Century. Journalists in this model actively strived for fairness and balance in reports and practiced as neutral observers in communities. Unlike the Libertarian model, which presumes the marketplace will eventually produce fairness and balance, the social responsibility model places a positive duty on journalists to achieve those goals. Yet today, more than 30 years after the Hutchins Commission report led to the development of Social Responsibility theory, newspapers face increasingly poor performance reviews from media critics and from the public.

Some find answers in exploration of Communitarian theory and how it may help reshape journalistic practice through public journalism in order to more effectively revitalize both newspapers and public participation in communities.

Communitarianism shifts attention away from the individual to a view of people as connected through community networks. Communitarianism is characterized by the belief in shared reality or meaning created through experience. Resolutions to problems, then, emerge through the interaction of people with one another. In this model, individualism is replaced not by its opposite, collectivism, but instead by what its advocates call universal solidarity characterized by mutuality. Here, persons in relation to community are central to the nature of human existence. Communitarian theory helps shape a new style of journalism: public journalism, a movement gaining acceptance in American newsrooms in the 1990s, even as it draws criticism. Public journalism, still an experimental form, calls into question some foundations of traditional journalistic practice. Rather than social responsibility, its goal is social change. Here, journalists became participant observers in communities, rather than neutral observers.

Method

This case study uses focus groups and a survey of newsroom employees to explore why and how The State chose its topic of study for Project Reconnect. The structured focus groups offered the advantage of receiving immediate feedback from readers who, in their own words, described their views of the disconnect. Focus group responses lend understanding to how readers use the newspaper and how they believe the newspaper could be improved. Specifically, the participants explained how the newspaper could better help them connect more meaningfully to others in their community.

The newsroom survey included both open and close-ended questions that assessed staff understanding of the disconnect, opinions about public journalism in general and about Project Reconnect in particular. The survey allowed staff to report responses anonymously in order to encourage candid answers.

The case study results, though not generalizable to other newspapers, may help others interested in improving connections with citizens on a daily basis learn more about how to launch a successful public journalism effort.

The newspaper editors selected readers of religious faith, defined as those for whom faith influences daily decision making, as the basis for the Reconnect effort. Use of imprecise language and where stories were placed in the paper had surfaced as important causes for reader dissatisfaction with The State when it covered a lesbian ceremony in January of 1996. [1] The article drew one of the strongest backlashes from readers The State had ever endured. Some Columbia, S.C., church leaders called for a boycott of the paper, others organized letter writing campaigns. The Northern Baptist Church, for example, sent a letter to the paper with 20 signatures,

saying "We hope that the mail has shown what the Christian community feels about this type of reporting," (The State, letter to the editor, Jan. 24, 1996).

A woman who described herself as a "an avid newspaper reader" and "news junkie" said she was offended by the article because it ran counter to local values. But she said she would not cancel her subscription because "that would punish me more than it would you but I do plead with you to be sensitive to the moral values of your readers! Is it too much to ask that you would reflect similar values? Please reconsider your editorial policy, remembering your constituency and respecting our culture," (The State, letter to the editor, Jan. 24, 1996).

Editors began to talk about the reaction as reader alienation and to contemplate how religion coverage could be improved (Thelen, 1996). Ultimately, reaction to the same-sex ceremony article served as a catalyst for The State to select people of religious faith as the target group for its Project Reconnect goal.

The paper solicited readers of faith through advertisements and editorials published in the paper and 180 readers responded. Sixty were selected for participation in meetings with a professional moderator and 36 actually participated. [2]

In order to supplement the focus group data, this survey of The State newsroom staff asked the staff about whether readers of religious faith were disconnected from the paper and about their interest in Project Reconnect and public journalism. [3]

Background: Knight-Ridder's Attempt to Reach Readers

The State newspaper began serving readers in South Carolina's capital city more than a century ago. Founded in 1891 by South Carolinians

Ambrose and N.G. Gonzales, the paper remained an independently owned operation with a majority of local residents as staff until 1988, when the nation's second largest newspaper chain took over. Knight-Ridder Corp. brought the paper's first executive editor from outside of South Carolina, Gil Thelen, to the helm of the newsroom in 1990. By 1997, nearly half of the 60 staff reporters were non-South Carolina natives.

One of the first moves Knight-Ridder Inc. made when it purchased the paper in 1988 was to include The State in its once every-other-year survey of readers. The surveys, performed by professional marketing firms, provided reader and non-reader demographics, analyzed newspaper use and reader attitude toward content, and offered marketing suggestions to stabilize and increase readership. Knight-Ridder used the results to compare The State with newspapers of similar circulation as well as with all newspapers it owns.

In 1994, the last survey before Project Reconnect began, results showed that The State's daily readership had increased among 34-to-54 year-olds but that younger people and African-Americans were under-represented.

The State performed well on its test of reader satisfaction, falling in line with other Knight-Ridder papers in its category. On closer examination, the study offered some insight into readers' views of The State's coverage of religion. It said that Columbia readers' strong interest in religion coverage set The State apart from other newspapers owned by Knight-Ridder. The level of interest in news about religion was substantially higher than at papers with similar circulation as well as among Knight-Ridder papers overall.

Religion was left off the researchers' recommendation list for improving coverage and increasing readership, however. The marketers

apparently did not think that improving religion coverage, which, according to the study, appealed most to poor risk readers, would be a worthwhile effort. The study concluded that the potential for adding new readers in the Columbia market was very limited. The single most important demographic predictor of whether a person read The State was race. The marketers said that the paper paid too little attention to issues about race, both about whites and African-Americans.

The report indicated that minorities were the most disconnected from the paper. However, minorities were seen by the marketers as poor risks for readership and the study did not recommend attempting to reach out to them.

The State's own marketing study report suggested that attempting to improve religion coverage may not have been the best way to improve reader satisfaction with the paper, one measure of connectedness. Beyond that, citizens unlikely to read the paper at all, African Americans, were not selected for the paper's Reconnect effort, perhaps because the marketers did not consider them affluent enough to warrant special attention. Race relations are complex in Columbia and that may be another reason that the paper did not choose that topic for study. The paper had already been trying to improve its coverage of African Americans in the community, according to then executive editor Gil Thelen. As Thelen told some focus group members:

> Race is one that is very difficult because we have a community that is about one third black. One of my personal goals is to make the newspaper look like our community. And 20 years ago, it would be rare to find a picture of a black person in The State newspaper unless they were arrested. As one of those agenda items I had when I came was that I wanted The State newspaper to look a lot more

like our community. We were doing a lousy job of covering the black community, so I really wanted to throw the net wider in terms of what the newspaper represented and what kinds of stories it did. And particularly, the representation of blacks in non-stereotypical ways, really brings out the bigots here

(Focus Group No. 5, pp. 93-94).

Findings

In general, the focus group participants offered comments about the newspaper and the community that reflected a sincere interest in improving the quality of life in Columbia. Few of the people of religious faith who volunteered called for news coverage that would advance their own religious viewpoints to the exclusion of others. Nearly all expressed apparently deep-seated beliefs that the newspaper plays an important role in helping members of the community connect to each other.

The focus groups indicated that the word "disconnect" may be too strong a term to describe how they viewed the paper. The participants provided useful information about the function of newspapers, about their views of the religious community and how it was reflected in the newspaper. They shared views on how they perceive religion, communities and newspapers to be connected. They offered specific advice on how to improve coverage and explained in some detail what kind of coverage they found objectionable.

Results of the staff questionnaire provided useful information as well, though reporters and editors who answered the survey provided answers that, in contrast to the focus groups, were highly cynical. More than 70 percent of the staff refused to fill out the questionnaires. Some staff said they feared that if they participated, they would face

repercussions from Knight-Ridder, such as being bypassed for raises, promotions or transfers. There was still lingering hostility in The State newsroom toward management for its public apology for the lesbian ceremony coverage.

Those who responded showed limited interest in people of religious faith and lack of support for Project Reconnect. Some staff said they thought people of religious faith were disconnected readers from the paper, but more said they thought those readers were no more alienated than other types of readers. Many said they thought people of religious faith were interested only in advancing their own agendas.

Lamenting the Loss of Southern Culture

Many participants in the focus groups were concerned about what they perceived was the loss of Southern culture and the newspaper's role in creating it. The notion that "Yankees" were condescending toward Southerners surfaced again and again. Respondents saw the newspaper as frequently perpetuating the stereotype that local South Carolinians were stuck in a past that no longer reflected reality.

For a member of Focus Group No. 5, newspaper coverage of the abortion issue made the point. "I feel often times that if the writer of the article is pro-choice, then they go to the absolute most ignorant person in the pro-life group and ask them what they think. They show the man down in front of the Statehouse waving the dead baby around. And that offends me, you know, even though I'm on the other side. It offends me as a Christian because I think, here comes the damn Yankees, coming down here, trying to tell me that I don't know anything," (Focus Group No. 5, p. 39).

An exchange between members of Focus Group No. 3 also demonstrated a sense of uneasiness about change in the community and in

the newspaper. One member said, "I guess those of us who have been here all our lives. . .we get a little nervous when we see things changing. . .because it's our way of life," (Focus Group No. 3, p. 25). Another member of the group agreed, saying, "I think South Carolina is evolving and I see The State paper doing the same thing," (Focus Group No. 3, p. 25). The first respondent answered, "I'm not saying I resent them for doing that. It is just that there is a sense of loss there...of something you used to have that is no longer there," (Focus Group No. 3, p. 25).

Prompted by the moderator to explain when the newspaper changed, one participant responded, "When the Columbia Record folded," (Focus Group No. 3, p. 27). Actually, Knight-Ridder shut down the Record. The Knight-Ridder-owned afternoon paper was more liberal, the participants agreed, but the paper also exposed residents to different viewpoints and that benefitted the community. Not all participants thought the paper was better before Knight-Ridder bought it, however. A member of Focus Group No. 5, who had moved to the South, for example, said, "Came down here in the 80s and I was just amazed at how mediocre The State was back in those days. This was pre-Knight-Ridder. And I kind of thought it was akin to a mediocre high school newspaper," (Focus Group No. 5, p. 5).

Participants also encouraged the paper to explore ways to help individuals in the community connect with each other. Some encouraged Thelan to consider how the paper could help improve race relations in Columbia.[4]

> Thelen explained that trying to improve coverage of minorities: has cost us a lot of subscribers, I'll guarantee you. I mean we have purposefully tried to show what this community looks like photographically. And virtually every time that we show what this community looks like photographically. . .virtually every time we

picture a black person on the front page of this newspaper, I get hate voice mail. People cancel their subscriptions

(Focus Group No. 5, pp. 83-84).

Staff Perceptions: What's Wrong?

The return rate of 38 of 138 of the questionnaires was low yet the responses gave some insight into how the staff perceived the nature of the disconnection with people of faith. The answers illuminated what newsroom staff believed concerned readers most. Most of the respondents -- 20, or 53 percent -- said they thought The State was disconnected from people of religious faith. Another 16 percent said they didn't know and nearly 28 percent said they did not think people of faith were disconnected from the paper. The answers, even the "yes" responses, demonstrated a wide range of thoughts about the dilemma, however.

For one, those who did say people of faith were disconnected tended to qualify their answers. Some said they thought The State had already gone too far to reach out to religious readers in the past year. "I worry that we are simply paying too much attention to religious conservatives," one editor wrote. A reporter said people of faith were disconnected but "we've taken the idea too far. We go to extremes now, covering Billy Graham and Tony Evans to excess. To institute these changes and have them make a long-term impact, we need to stop going overboard." Some who saw people of faith as disconnected said those readers weren't much different than other groups. "I don't think (people of faith are) any more than other ethnic, social or religious groups," a reporter said.

Others said religious conservatives were the ones who complained most -- though unfairly -- about the paper. One reporter wrote "those who choose to bury themselves in dogma, yes (are disconnected) but they're disconnected with everyone but those of their belief." An editor said

people of faith were disconnected "to the extent they feel disconnected with aspects of the secular world that make them feel ill at ease." Another editor qualified the answer by saying, "if you're talking about evangelical Christians, yes. If you're talking about mainstream religions, no."

Those who said people of faith were not disconnected tended to dismiss the idea with no explanation for their position or to imply that religious readers were simply complainers. "They don't trust us unless we stroke them and their ignorant doctrines," a reporter wrote. Another said people of faith wanted the newspaper to be a church bulletin. Respondents who said they didn't know whether people of faith were disconnected were either not on the job long enough to form an opinion or were cryptic in their replies. For instance, one said "perhaps, don't know. Liberal views and stories may turn them off."

Overall, staff who answered the questionnaire indicated that the target group of people of faith may not have been the group most disconnected from the paper, even though the majority of respondents said "yes" to the question. Those who said "yes," tended to qualify their answers. Those who said "no" seemed to view religious readers as perpetual critics who would not be happy with the newspaper coverage unless it advanced religious causes.

The questionnaire did not prompt staff to disclose which group of readers they believed were most disconnected but several staff suggested they believe The State does a poor job of representing minorities in the community.

The survey did monitor their thoughts on readers' most frequent complaints about the paper. Two concerns emerged: favoring liberals over conservatives and corporate ownership of the paper. Of the 38 respondents, 21 or 55 percent said readers thought the newspaper

coverage was too liberal. Reporters in particular -- nearly 62 percent -- said they heard readers complain most often about coverage that leaned too far to the left. The two concerns actually may have been linked. Readers, according to the respondents, thought of Knight-Ridder Corp. as an outside company that dictated liberal coverage without regard for local values. Twenty-three percent of the staff who answered the questionnaire said they thought readers were suspicious of the newspaper's parent company. Many said they thought older readers who subscribed to The State when it was an independently owned paper resented Knight-Ridder the most.

Not only was Knight-Ridder viewed as dictating liberal coverage, it also was seen as a company that had brought outsiders to South Carolina who didn't understand the local community. As one respondent pointed out, "we're viewed as outsiders, owned by a Northern company. Editorial positions against the flag and endorsements of some Democrats infuriate readers."

Some respondents tied the complaint about being too liberal to religious readers; others to political issues. Overall, the responses indicated that newspaper staff thought readers were most alienated from the paper because its coverage leaned to the left and because the paper was too heavily influenced by non-locals who didn't understand the values and history of the community.

The staff responses stand in strong contrast to the focus group participants about the nature of the disconnect. The staff speculated that people of faith would say they were disconnected because the paper was too liberal, particularly since Knight-Ridder had purchased it. Indeed, some focus group participants did indicate they wished the paper was more conservative and less inclined to be "politically correct."

A perception of Knight-Ridder as a company that had changed the paper drew mixed responses from the focus groups, however. Most of the people of religious faith who raised the issue said they thought Knight-Ridder had improved the paper, not hurt it.

Conclusion

The project team's choice of people of religious faith does make sense for several reasons. Journalists and religious people have a long-standing mutual mistrust of one another, as suggested by the review of literature, and that alone would seem to justify a reconnect effort. Moreover, as explained by then-executive editor Gil Thelan, and as documented in The State's market study, religion plays an important role in South Carolina, perhaps more so than in other states in the country.

Finally, the newspaper's publication of the article on the lesbian ceremony raised awareness in the newsroom about how use of language, portrayal of values, display and prominence of stories sometimes offends readers -- in this case, people of religious faith. These reasons led newspaper editors to choose people of faith for the project target group and together they may supply adequate justification for the decision. However, results of the staff questionnaire demonstrated that few of The State's own reporters and editors actually believed that people of faith were the best target for the project.

Rather, The State journalists indicated they believed that other concerns were more important. For instance, they suggested that race relations in Columbia were of greater concern than faith issues, a sentiment shared by some of the focus group members as well. Considering that the paper's own market study also identified the newspaper's coverage of race as a concern for readers and nonreaders, a study of that

topic may have yielded more meaningful results.

Focus group members suggested specifically that the paper might help promote community involvement by serving as a facilitator of discussion about race issues. A study of race relations in Columbia with the goal of identifying ways the newspaper could enhance connections between African Americans and Caucasians may have been better suited to the goals of public journalism. This study indicated that staff, some readers and the paper's own marketing researchers perceived race to be an important indicator of who reads The State and of which citizen groups participate in community affairs, two ways of viewing connectedness.

The staff and focus group members also identified regionalism as a community concern. Knight-Ridder's purchase of The State may have been understood by local readers in the context of division between Northerners and Southerners, despite the fact that the company's national headquarters were in Miami at the time of this study. An exploration of how local readers perceive a disconnect between Southern tradition and modern-day integration of cultures also may have yielded relevant information for journalistic change. Both race and regionalism may have warranted study. The staff and the readers who participated in Project Reconnect perceived that those two topics were important in Columbia. The perception held by stakeholders in a public journalism project, in this case, journalists and readers of faith, appeared to be an important factor in the success of the effort.

However, the attempt at reaching out to readers of faith provided information that could prove useful to The State. The effort revealed that the relationship between the newspaper staff and readers of religious faith was strained. The State journalists appeared disinterested in people of religious faith, rather than the other way around, though the small return

rate of questionnaires prevented generalizing about the entire staff. The limited participation by journalists may in itself have reflected a general disconnect with those readers.

As a result, Project Reconnect may have been effective in at least identifying ways the paper could improve its relationship with readers of religious faith. This result of the focus groups could help the paper make important inroads into improving its relationship with readers of religious faith -- but only if the staff was willing to incorporate some of the suggested changes.

However, the staff response to the project overall suggested that willingness to incorporate change may be limited. The responses of reporters and editors indicated a fear of participating in the staff questionnaire, resentment toward people of faith in general, and a limited understanding or support for public journalism.

Lessons in Connecting

Project Reconnect demonstrated a number of concerns important to the success of public journalism in the second stage. The project was poorly conceived as evident in a number of ways. The target group had been chosen by editors before the project began and there was little documentation for why those readers were viewed as disconnected. Those most affected by the project in the long term, reporters, apparently did not understand the purpose of the plan or accept the premise that a special effort was needed. There was no clearly identified goal and no method for measuring outcomes.

The focus groups yielded valuable information for improving newspaper coverage and The State could have used more of those results to make change. However, the project may not have gone far enough in improving relationships between people of faith and the newspaper.

The State editors' selection of the target group, people of religious faith, may not have been the audience most disconnected from the paper. Faith plays an important role in Columbia, South Carolina, perhaps more so than in other communities. Yet the focus groups members generally agreed that the existing coverage was adequate, even though they did suggest improvements. Staff who responded to the questionnaire indicated that African American readers were more disconnected than people of faith, a conclusion supported by the paper's own market study.

The marketers did not recommend readership drives among blacks in Columbia, however, perhaps because those residents are less affluent. Editors did not identify the affluence of people of faith as a factor in why those readers were selected as the target for the project. However, staff appeared to believe that the influence people of religious faith hold in the community -- if not affluence -- was one reason editors chose them.

Whether affluence was actually a factor may not be as important as whether the staff believed it was. Lack of support from staff clearly affected Project Reconnect and likely affects the way reporters now view people of faith in the community. To avoid the perception of pandering, public journalists should document specifically how and why targeted readers are alienated before launching an effort to reconnect. Organizers may improve the success of projects if they have a clearly thought-out project design. Project Reconnect likely would have yielded stronger results if editors had taken this step before requiring staff to participate in the effort.

Reporter participation is key to the success of public journalism projects. If reporters don't support the paper's attempt to reach out, relationships with readers are unlikely to improve. As a result, the perception held by those involved in the public journalism project may be

as important as the reality. In this sense, Project Reconnect serves as a model for other public journalism projects across the country.

Efforts designed to strengthen relationships with specific groups of readers should be chosen with care. Staff should draw from many resources in determining the focus of a public journalism effort, particularly one designed to incorporate change at the level of daily journalism. The State may have done well to draw from its own marketing study, for example, and to include reporters in decision-making. Preliminary research may have helped the paper choose a topic more worthy of study. In this case, the paper may have done better to survey readers about what they believe the newspaper should consider for a public journalism topic.

Public journalists must avoid even the appearance of pandering if their efforts are to be taken seriously by readers and by peers. If public journalism is seen by participants as an attempt to hand affluent readers what they want in order to attract revenues, efforts likely will harm rather than heal relationships.

Suggestions for Further Study

The findings from this study demonstrate that public journalism remains an experimental form demanding more study before it can be effectively incorporated into daily practice. Journalists themselves are likely to be the chief opponents of efforts in the second stage unless they come to accept a need for the new approach. Reporters and editors on the front line of responding to readers have the potential to harm rather than help improve connections. As a result, leaders of the public journalism movement should address the concern of staff skepticism about the movement. To do so may require a re-examination of traditional top-down management practices, as described below.

Researchers who study journalists' attitudes had begun in the 1990s to see a decline in job satisfaction among newsroom employees. For example, in 1998, the American Society of Newspaper Editors found in a study called "The Newspaper Journalists of the 90's" that journalists were less optimistic than they had been in an earlier study conducted in 1988.

The findings called on newsroom managers to provide stronger leadership, citing in particular the need for more one-on-one communications between journalists and supervisors. The study found that career-burnout remained a serious threat to newsrooms in the 1990s, with 24 percent of the journalists saying that their biggest complaint was too many hours required to get the job done. Other complaints were having little impact, having little opportunity to be creative and low pay and benefits. Most said their newsroom budgets had declined compared to five years earlier and most --71 percent -- believed that their newsroom budgets were inadequate to cover the news.

Interestingly, the report found that the majority of journalists who were surveyed supported some of the concepts of public journalism. For example, 96 percent of the respondents said they approved of reporting on alternative solutions to community problems and of pointing out the tradeoffs involved. Another 88 percent said they supported enterprise reporting stories that had backup from editorials designed to help communities move toward solutions. Polling the public to determine the most important community issues and trying to get candidates to focus on those issues drew support from 71 percent of the respondents. Finally, 68 percent said they supported the idea of holding town meetings to find key issues and then following up with stories that offered solutions. The survey did not identify the four concepts as public journalism but instead asked the journalists to agree or disagree with the ideas. Most of them favored

the suggestions, which serve as key elements of public journalism.

Many of the ASNE findings about journalists' attitudes toward their profession were supported in studies by Weaver and Wilhoit in the most recent of their decennial studies of newsrooms. Their 1992 survey of journalists found "a significant decline in perceived autonomy since the early 1970s, as well as diminished job satisfaction" (Weaver and Wilhoit, p. 240, 1996). They found that journalists perceived a decline in organizational incentives and resources to cover the news adequately. Weaver and Wilhoit predicted that the results have serious implications for the quality of news the public receives.

The journalists surveyed for the study listed as internal constraints on news as: inadequate staffing or time, the corrosive effects of a concern for profit over quality, limits on travel, policy restrictions on what is newsworthy and management emphasis on reader-driven news values.

The organizational constraints journalists identified may be a result of the increased number of corporate media owners in the 1990s, according to the Weaver and Wilhoit study. Journalists linked lessened autonomy in making decisions to the onset of the corporate culture in newsrooms and the resulting rise in authoritarian, top-down management styles that they said hampered initiative. The corporate culture or "..the requirements of lenders and stockholders in contemporary media properties have put the ability of journalists to perform their essential role in serving society at risk," (Weaver and Wilhoit, p. 244, 1996).

The studies about journalists attitudes in the 1990s raise important considerations for public journalists. For one, the research showed that journalists believe they have limited autonomy in making decisions about coverage and that managers use authoritarian leadership styles that restrict reporter initiative. This concern raises the question of whether

public journalism advocates should first address ways of changing newsroom culture before attempting to change journalistic technique. Under communitarian principles, reporters should be treated as first among equals in newsrooms, and if they are not, they may be unwilling to participate in public journalism projects suggested by managers.

The success of public journalism, which stresses interpretation of community problems and solutions, may depend more on raising the interests of reporters called upon to make change than upon reaching out to readers viewed as disconnected. Advocates of the public journalism movement, then, may do better to research first how newsrooms can increase reporter autonomy in decision-making, provide adequate resources for new reporting projects and encourage interpretative reporting, than to focus on how to improve connections with specific groups of readers. Public journalism in the second stage may be more successful at incorporating change in daily coverage if its supporters look first to insiders for deciding what's wrong than to outsiders for deciding what to change.

The problems facing newspapers and communities that led to the start of public journalism in the early 1980s remained in 1998 as this study came to an end. The early stages, public journalism reporting projects, aimed at increasing citizen involvement in elections, showed promise of bringing about important change. The early second stage public journalism projects, such as Project Reconnect, also offer hope to advocates that newspapers can reclaim the important role of providing a forum for community discussion and help rekindle interest among citizens in public affairs. Public journalism serves as a viable catalyst for change. Its advocates offer traditional journalists a reason to hope that they can make a difference in the lives of citizens. They offer citizens reason to believe

that newspapers can provide fair and accurate accounts of the issues that matter, in ways that demonstrate mutual respect.

However, as demonstrated by the results of this study, public journalists must take note of the potential to increase distrust among readers and reporters with projects that appear to pander. Journalists who falter in their attempts to bring about change may cause the failure of the movement before it has a chance to prove itself.

Endnotes

1. The State's story about the union ceremony between local women appeared as the centerpiece of the Living section cover front. Four color photos of the couple were published on the cover and the article continued to an inside page with another 50 column inches of text and one more photo. The inside page featuring the lesbian ceremony appeared opposite a page featuring traditional wedding and anniversary announcements.

1. The group was nearly evenly divided between men and women. The average respondent was a white Protestant between 45 and 55 years old, who attended church at least once a week, who read the newspaper nearly every day and who had lived in South Carolina for about 20 years. Half of the respondents had earned a graduate degree.

3. The questionnaire was administered to the entire newsroom and the paper's executive editor urged by memo that staff participate. However, only 36 filled out the survey. Followup memos from the executive editor encouraging more participation drew no other responses.

Those who did participate included: 13 reporters, 11 editors, five designers and artists, four staff persons (such as librarian) and five who did not provide their job titles.

4. The moderator led discussions with each of the six focus groups while some newspaper staff watched from behind a one-

way mirror. At the end of each session, staff answered specific questions from the participants. Each session was tape recorded. The tapes were then professional transcribed and the resulting scripts were used as the basis for this study.

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CIVIC JOURNALISM

AND GENDER DIVERSITY IN NEWS-STORY SOURCING

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Abstract

Civic journalism is posited as a corrective for traditional journalism, and the under-representation of women as sources of news information represents one of traditional journalism's weaknesses. A comparative content analysis of civic- and traditional-journalism newspapers found that the appearance of women as information sources increased under civic journalism, but only marginally and only in stories reported by female journalists. Men sources remained numerically dominant. Questions about civic journalism's success as a corrective are raised.

Civic-journalism proponent Jan Schaffer asks, "Do women editors or news directors produce more civic newspapers or news casts than men?"[1] Implicit in this question of heuristic intent is the proposition that the extent to which civic journalism gets done depends not on the rank-and-file doers but rather on whether their manager is man or woman. However, a manager's work generally stops short of the actual doing; that is, her job essentially is to guide the implementation of whatever tasks she believes must be done by the workers she manages. Success or failure ultimately hinges at some crucial point in implementation on the labors of the managed. Given that, one could recast Schaffer's query to more broadly ask, "Do women journalists do civic journalism somehow differently than their male colleagues?"

Civic journalism is posited generally as a newswork routine that could reverse traditional journalism's shortcomings. Thus far researchers have shown the most interest in civic journalism's use to reform political reporting to ultimately bring more average citizens into the news, the democratic process and the civic lives of their communities.[2]

One shortcoming of traditional journalism that has yet to be fully explored from a civic-journalism perspective is that of the under-representation of women in the news. Shoemaker and Reese note that traditional journalism's "practices and routines [may] effectively suppress effects on content due to [the communicator's] gender,"[3] even though more women are entering the profession.[4] It could be that the key to unlocking this suppressed gender effect is to be found in the reformist principles and newswork routines of civic journalism.

The present study focuses on the gender diversity of information sources in news produced under civic journalism. Specifically, it tested the proposition that reporters working in a newsroom where civic journalism has been implemented will give greater representation to women than will journalists reporting traditionally. This work is important, to paraphrase First and Shaw, because the voices reporters use to tell the news often can help shape what audiences think about events and the actors involved. "Therefore, the news [representation] of women may influence their ability to enter the public sphere"[5] as legitimate sources of a uniquely female perspective on the important issues and events of the day.

News Sources and Gender Diversity

Male voices dominate the telling of the daily news. This is a fairly consistent finding of news-story sourcing studies that analyzed content produced through traditional journalism's practices and routines. Women generally were just as under-represented in news in the 1980s as they were in news published in the 1990s.[6] Their numbers, as news-information sources, trail those for men by substantial degrees in front-page newspaper stories,[7] national-security and defense coverage,[8] and in reporting by business magazines.[9] They are the minority among invited guests on morning TV talk shows.[10] In

newspaper stories and TV newscasts from around the world, women infrequently appear as newsmakers, story subjects or news-information sources.[11] Moreover, their appearances as sources tends to be limited by story topic and they typically are portrayed as the targets of action rather than as its initiators.[12] It seems no wonder, given the nearly imperceptible female news presence, that women readers generally believe their newspapers have male personalities.[13]

McQuail offers one explanation, noting a quantifiable connection "between the relatively low numbers and the lower occupational status of women in news media organizations … and the underrepresentation [sic] or stereotyping of women in the news."[14] However, he also acknowledges that news content scarcely reflects the fact that more women now are working as journalists. For example, depictions of women remain stereotypical at publications where females occupy top editorial positions.[15] Kinnick suggests female sports journalists "bear the responsibility for some of the stereotypical [reporting]" of the 1996 Olympic Games.[16]

Increasing the number of females as journalists has been seen as a curative for the under-representation of women in the news. Yet Splichal and Garrison[17] see three possibilities for why this prescription has generally failed to work. For one, journalists could be similar by most measures, except gender. Or perhaps female journalists ultimately adopt the norms they find in residence in their predominately male newsrooms. Or third, women's socialization into the routines of traditional journalism suppresses any gender effect to arise from their numerically greater newsroom presence.

On the one hand, if female journalists are occupationally indistinguishable from their male colleagues, then the case could be closed: there simply is no gender effect for researchers to discover. A number of scholars argue, however, that journalism is

transformed into a gendered newswork practice owing to the dominance of male norms in the newsroom.[18] Traditional newswork routines essentially lead reporters to seek out male sources because the newsroom's dominant norms vest those sources with greater importance and credibility. This arguably is amplified by the news media's penchant for attending primarily "elite" sources[19] and the predominance of men in the elite circles of American political and social power.[20]

There could be a gender effect on content if not for it being held in check by the long-practiced, gendered routines of traditional journalism. However, it is probable that the effect could be realized through the regular use of a reformed collection of newswork routines. Civic journalism, with its emphasis on participation, inclusion and the newsworthiness of the "average citizen," would seem ideally suited to that task.

Civic Journalism as Reform

Civic journalism, which also goes by the names "public" and "citizen-based" journalism, arrived on the scene in the early 1990s to fire a debate within the U.S. journalism industry like no other before it this century.[21] Despite the quantity of the debate and of news-media efforts to put variously stated civic-journalism principles into practice, there is no formal theory or widely accepted definition of the phenomenon to test. A number of researchers have remedied this deficit by broadly defining civic journalism as reform and then judging its success by comparing its results to traditionally reported news.[22]

Lambeth offers further support for so defining civic journalism, suggesting that "public journalists depict their civic-minded initiatives as a *needed corrective to traditional journalism*.

> Most regard mainline news as often overly conflictual and neglectful of community interests or needs. They perceive many mainline journalists as unwilling to innovate in the face of eroding popular support for journalism and reluctant to think seriously about *reform* amid an endemic antimedia mood of the body politic [emphasis added].[23]

He proposes a five-point definition of civic journalism,[24] synthesized from the research and trade literature. Two of the five offer the most guidance to the present study. Restated, they are:

Systematic listening to citizens. Civic journalists could be distinguished from traditional journalists by the higher quality of their listening skills. That is, their reformed newswork practice has been found useful for constructing a systematic and social-scientific-like structure for hearing more of what their communities say.[25] Civic journalists strive to hear all of a community's different voices instead of only those of the politician, civic and business leader, and other members of a community's elite.[26] One of the civic journalist's goals is to give voice to the voiceless – to bring into the telling of the day's news those community members held largely mute by traditional journalism's routines. And a sizeable group of the "news-voiceless" is comprised of women.

Alternative news-story framing. Journalists frame their stories, or set their stories' central organizing themes, by including some facts and excluding others, and that consequently elevates the salience of the included facts for news audiences.[27] How audiences perceive a reported news event or public-policy issue – what they think about the event or issue, and the actors involved – is influenced to some extent by the frame that the report's journalist-author gives it.[28] One working element of framing is sourcing: to whom the included facts are attributed – the voices that are employed for telling the news

– can be just as influential as the facts themselves on audience opinion.[29] Given that news reported traditionally tends to contain more male than female voices, civic journalists could be expected to fashion alternative news-story frames by including more women as news-information sources.

Systematic listening and alternative framing are two ways of operationalizing the civic-journalism norm of "community connectedness"[30] for journalists' use. A civic journalist thus can be conceptualized as a journalist who connects to a community by listening closely to what all of its members are saying, and then uses what is heard in those conversations to construct alternative frames through which news of importance to the community is reported. Civic journalism becomes manifest as "a needed corrective" to journalism's traditional ways when its listening and framing reforms are put into play.

Moreover, civic journalism's reformist routines arguably must become institutionalized in the newsroom if they are to win long term success at correcting the shortcomings of traditional journalism. Confining their use to such occasional project-reporting topics as an election campaign "is itself a barrier to change … [D]oing projects is one way journalism stays the same."[31] Civic journalism must be exercised regularly lest it atrophy. It should be an everyday newswork practice: its routines should be found in place of the traditional ones that civic journalists say need reforming. And the results of the reform should be evident across the full range of news content in which traditional journalism's shortcomings now appear.

Research Hypotheses

The *Tallahassee Democrat* in Florida's state capital is one daily newspaper that has attempted to institutionalize the principles of civic journalism. In late 1994 the *Democrat*'s newsroom managers, working through a two-and-a-half year, Pew Center for

Civic Journalism-funded project titled "The Public Agenda," sought to bring more average citizens' voices to bear on its local-news coverage.[32]

The *Democrat*'s conversion to civic journalism offers a natural basis for making comparisons: its local-news reporting under civic journalism can be measured against that of its past, traditional-journalism self. In addition, the daily *Gainesville (FL) Sun*, which practiced traditional journalism at the time the *Democrat* had converted to civic newswork,[33] offers another venue for comparison. The two newspapers are similar in many ways. Both are headquartered in university towns, and in the mid-1990s, they published an equivalent number of copies for readers in similarly sized counties.[34] The *Democrat* even covers state-government news as the *Sun* does – from a small bureau in the Capitol press building.

One implication of systematic listening, as a civic-journalism corrective, is that people not normally attended by journalists now will be vested with increased newsworthiness. What they say does matter, and it forms the basis for alternative frames constructed from information contributed by and attributed to them. Traditional journalism, by turning predominately to men for news-story information, is in effect saying that women should not receive equitable treatment as news sources. Under civic journalism, the opposite should be true. Hence, it was proposed that:

> H1: More women will appear as information sources in news produced by reporters working in a civic-journalism newsroom than will appear in news produced in a newsroom where traditional journalism is practiced.

The newswork routines of traditional journalism are thought to hold in check any gender effect arising from efforts to increase the number of women in the journalism profession. Women tend to receive similar treatment in content produced by female and

male journalists. But the gender effect – conceptualized for the present study as an increased inclusion in news content of women sources – could be unlocked through civic journalism's reformed set of newsgathering routines. In other words, civic journalism should give female journalists a newswork structure for going against the traditional grain. It is probable that it works similarly on its male practitioners: journalists (regardless of gender) who work to civic journalism's inclusive, non-gendered routines will seek to give a community's news-voiceless (no matter their gender) a place in the telling of news. To test this, two hypotheses were proposed:

> H2: Female reporters working in a civic newsroom will include more women sources in their stories than will their same-gender counterparts in a traditional newsroom.
>
> H3: Male reporters working in a civic newsroom will include more women sources in their stories than will male reporters working in a traditional newsroom.

Method

Three samples of seven constructed weeks each were drawn from the 1995 editions published by the *Democrat* and *Sun*, and from the *Democrat*'s 1988 publication run. The former year was the last year the Tallahassee newspaper was led by the executive editor who introduced it to civic journalism.[35] The latter was selected because it was a watershed year for civic journalism: criticism of the news media's 1988 presidential election coverage led to the emergence of the civic-journalism movement.[36]

The analysis was conducted on articles appearing on either Page 1A or the newspapers' Local News section fronts. Only local-news stories were included, and "local news" was operationalized as stories carrying the by-lines of the newspapers' local-staff news writers or Capitol Bureau reporters.

A "source" was defined as a person to whom a reporter attributed information either by full or partial quotation or paraphrase. For sources, gender was judged by their first names, as given upon the first reference to them in a news story. For reporters, gender was determined from the first name of their by-line.

Sources were coded once for each story in which they appeared as a provider of news-information. In addition, they were coded for "speaking-role mentions," or the number of times they were cited in a single article. Citations were defined as news-information explicitly attributed to a source through quotation or reporter's paraphrase, and were coded once per paragraph per source. Sources also were coded for the number of lines of news-story text in which information was attributed to them by full quotation (their "direct" news voice) or by partial quote/paraphrase (their "indirect" news voice). This represents a combination of methods used in news-story sourcing studies by Stempel and Culbertson, and Hallin, Manoff and Weddle.[37]

Two graduate students in the Florida State University mass-communication department coded the articles, in conjunction with the author. Krippendroff's alpha coefficient for agreement beyond chance[38] was applied as an intercoder reliability check after subsets of approximately 10% of the articles in each sample were recoded. The coders agreed perfectly on discerning a source or reporter's sex. They agreed 88.3% of the time on tallying speaking-role mentions; agreement for counting full-quote lines was .95, and for partial quotes/paraphrases, it was .86.

Results

A total of 722 articles were contained in the data set: 212 for the 1995 *Democrat*, 230 for the 1988 *Democrat*, and 280 for the *Sun*. Reporter's gender was undeterminable from an article's by-line name for about 10% of the total, however.[39] During the two

Democrat years and at the *Sun*, local-news reporters were almost evenly divided by gender, among those for whom it could be determined. Sixteen of the 32 gender-identifiable reporters who contributed articles to the 1995 *Democrat* sample were women; in the 1988 *Democrat* sample, 15 of 28 reporters identified by gender were women. The 1995 *Sun* sample contained articles written by 17 women, out of a gender-identifiable reporting staff of 35.

However, gender diversity in the newsroom did not extend to news-story output: male reporters authored the majority of the articles in the analysis. For example, female journalists in the 1995 *Democrat* sample reported an average of 4.4 articles each, compared to an average 7.6 articles for their male colleagues. In 1988, at the traditional-journalism *Democrat*, the mean story-production rate stood at 6.0 for female reporters and 8.0 for male reporters. The Gainesville newspaper's female journalists reported an average of 6.7 articles in that sample, compared to 9.1 for males.

The first hypothesis predicted that the greatest inclusion of women as news sources would be found in content produced in a newsroom where civic journalism had been implemented. H1 found support, as Table 1 reports. On average, 1.15 women sources were referenced in those civic-journalism *Democrat* articles that used human sources. That was significantly higher than what observed for stories the Tallahassee newspaper published in 1988, about six years before it converted to civic journalism ($t = 3.13$, df 405.17; $p < .001$, 1-tail), and for stories reported traditionally in 1995 by the *Sun* ($t = 2.27$, df 403.45; $p < .01$, 1-tail). However, the two approaches to newswork were indistinguishable statistically on their per-story inclusion of male sources.

H2 predicted that female reporters in a civic-journalism newsroom would include more women sources in their stories than would female reporters working traditionally. It

too found support. In 1995, after the *Democrat* converted to civic journalism, stories by its female reporters attributed news-information to an average of 1.59 women sources, as Table 2 shows. That is a significant increase over the mean representation of women sources in the 1988 *Democrat*'s female-reported local news ($t = 3.17$, df 127.09; $p < .001$, 1-tail). It also is statistically noteworthy when compared to the mean per-story use of women sources in stories reported by the *Sun*'s female journalists ($t = 4.03$, df 107.03; $p < .0001$, 1-tail). Yet across the three sets of local-news stories, female journalists were essentially no different in their use of men as sources.

The data reported in Table 2 offered no support for H3. Male reporters – regardless of which approach to newswork was in play in their newsrooms – were statistically similar in the number of female and male sources they included in their local reporting, on average.

Voakes, Kapfer, Kurpius and Chern argue that even when source diversity is achieved, "if all attributions revert to the same frame or point of view, then we must question whether diversity is truly in evidence."[40] Likewise, if an increased number of women as sources do not speak anymore often to readers or do not speak anymore directly, then one also must question the extent of the diversity. Reporters can indicate the importance they placed on a certain news-story source – or a particular type of source – by citing her more frequently and by conveying her information more directly, through more full quotations. Women sources were vested with increased newsworthiness by the civic-journalism *Democrat*'s female reporters, as measured by news-story appearance rates. The question now is whether they gained a more frequent or more direct news voice than they had in the newspaper's 1988 female-reported news.

The answer, as Table 3 shows, is no. Female reporters at the civic- and traditional-journalism *Democrat* did not differ statistically on the per-story mean number of speaking-role mentions and the depth of direct quotation that they accorded their women sources. In addition, female-reported local news in the 1995 *Democrat* attributed information to women sources through significantly fewer partial quotes/paraphrases ($t = -3.69$, df 149; $p < .0001$, 1-tail) than was the case with the newspaper's traditionally working female reporters of 1988. Hence, women sources gained neither a more frequent nor more direct news voice, and they lost part of their indirect news voice, after the *Democrat* converted to civic journalism.

Discussion and Conclusions

An increase in source diversity can be conceptualized as a "more even [numerical] dispersion"[41] in the news-story appearance rate among different types of sources. Judged by this metric, the gender diversity of local-news sources improved at the Tallahassee *Democrat* after it made a newsroom policy of practicing civic journalism. Yet the increased inclusion of women sources is due exclusively its female reporters' efforts: the 1995 *Democrat*'s male reporters sourced their stories no differently, gender-wise, than their same-sex predecessors in 1988 and their male counterparts in 1995 at the *Sun*.

This is similar to the findings of Zoch and Turk, who concluded that female journalists at three southeastern U.S. newspapers were "more likely than their male colleagues to attribute information to female sources."[42] Interestingly, while civic journalism was not the focus their study, two of the newspapers they investigated -- North Carolina's *Charlotte Observer* and the *State* of Columbia, South Carolina -- enacted civic-journalism projects in the 1990s.[43]

At the *Democrat*, reporting from a newsroom that practiced civic journalism did appear to unlock a gender effect on sourcing, but only for news that was reported by females. Even so, the effect did not also mean that more citations or more quoted or paraphrased news-information would be attributed to women. Opportunities for women to tell the news increased, in terms of their numerical appearance in stories, but what they had to say was not given any greater play.

Moreover, although the effect was statistically important, it was modest at best and of little practical importance. While the civic-journalism *Democrat*'s female reporters alone gave greater representation to women as sources, they actually included an average of .65 additional women for each article they wrote, compared to their female predecessors of 1988. But they also wrote only 70 local stories, which appeared across 41 of the 49 editions sampled from the 1995 *Democrat*. That makes for a mean of 1.71 female-reported stories per edition – and about one more woman source for each issue of the Tallahassee newspaper that published the work of female reporters. It seems doubtful that the *Democrat*'s readers noticed this increased representation of women in their newspaper. And it also seems unlikely that it reaches the level of equivalent representation for women envisioned by critics of the preponderance of men sources in traditional reporting.

The *Democrat*'s female reporters may have constructed alternative news-story frames by listening to – and including – women sources more systematically, but it was traditional-newswork business as usual for the newspaper's male reporters. This may explain the weak showing of the gender effect on sourcing predicted for civic journalism. The numerical gain women sources made in news reported by female journalists were countered by the dominance of men sources in the male-reported local news. Or it may be

as Meyer[44] suggests: examining civic journalism by a single medium's practice of it – as the present case study has done – could mask or subdue effects on content arising from its use. Future research should consider testing civic journalism's gender dimension on a broader selection of newspapers attempting to put its principles into practice.

Nonetheless, even from the limited perspective of the present case study, it seems unlikely that civic journalism's practice will lead to noticeably large improvements in the representation of women until the sourcing behavior of male reporters in the civic-journalism newsroom changes. Why male reporters working under civic journalism may continue to source their stories predominately by men, as was the case at the 1995 *Democrat*, is question deserving of further study.

One of the principles of civic journalism is the inclusion in the news of a community's news-voiceless population, and that undoubtedly means breaking out of traditional news-beat structures and newsgathering routines that favor societal institutions where men may still dominate as readily accessible sources of information. If what the voiceless have to say does matter to civic journalists, then those reporters surely must make the extra effort of seeking them out on deadline, or be given the freedom from deadline to do so. It could be a matter of policy implementation, as Coleman and Kurpius have speculated for other instances of a weak civic-journalism effect.[45] Civic journalism at the *Democrat* may have been too ambiguously defined as a newswork policy to allow reporters to get a firm grasp on its concept or on how its principles could be regularly and reliably applied. On the other hand, the policy may have been clearly stated, but its implementation may not have been monitored sufficiently for detecting and correcting any deviations.

It also could be a matter of training. Civic journalism represents a departure from traditional newswork routines; therefore, to practice it effectively journalists would require some degree of in-service training. Future research should consider how reporters are trained in civic journalism, and how much training they receive.

Gender diversity in the civic-journalism newsroom – in terms of news-story production and hence, story assignments – also deserves scholars' attention. In the present example, female reporters at the 1995 *Democrat* wrote few stories and that may have diluted any gender effect on sourcing to be realized from their equal numerical strength in the newsroom and the newspaper's conversion to civic journalism. If civic journalism indeed corrects for traditional journalism's shortcomings, then its reformist reach seemingly should extend into the newsroom, as well as out to the community.

TABLE 1
Per-Story Mean Use of Sources by Gender

	Civic Journalism				Traditional Journalism		
	1995 T. *Demo* (n = 212)		**1988 T. *Demo*** (n = 230)	t-value[a]	**1995 G. *Sun*** (n = 280)		t-value[b]
Women Sources	mean	1.15	mean 0.79	3.13 *	mean	0.90	2.27 **
	sd	1.33	sd 1.07		sd	1.09	
Men Sources	mean	2.58	mean 2.56	0.09	mean	2.48	0.56
	sd	1.91	sd 1.89		sd	1.75	

[a] t *[Dem95-Dem88]* * $p < .001$ (1-tail)
[b] t *[Dem95-Sun95]* ** $p < .01$ (1-tail)

TABLE 2

Reporters' Mean Per-Story Inclusion of Sources

	Civic Journalism			Traditional Journalism		
	1995 T. *Demo* (n = 70)	**1988 T. *Demo*** (n = 90)	t-value[a]	**1995 G. *Sun*** (n = 114)	t-value[b]
Female Reporters					
Women Sources	mean 1.59 sd 1.40	mean 0.94 sd 1.09	3.17 *	mean 0.83 sd 0.93	4.03 **
Men Sources	mean 2.19 sd 1.68	mean 2.53 sd 1.94	-1.19	mean 1.95 sd 1.41	1.04
Male Reporters					
Women Sources	mean 0.89 sd 1.21	mean 0.68 sd 1.07	1.32	mean 0.94 sd 1.20	-0.37
Men Sources	mean 2.65 sd 1.89	mean 2.52 sd 1.82	0.52	mean 2.87 sd 1.87	-0.97

[a] t *[Dem95-Dem88]* * $p < .001$ (1-tail)

[b] t *[Dem95-Sun95]* ** $p < .0001$ (1-tail)

TABLE 3
Women Sources and Female Reporters:
Citation Frequency, Direct and Indirect News Voice

	1995 *Democrat*	**1988 *Democrat***	t-value
	n = 69	n = 90	
Speaking-Role Mention (citation)	mean 8.61 sd 5.33	mean 9.83 sd 5.99	-1.34
	n = 68	n = 86	
Lines of Full Quote (direct news voice)	mean 25.84 sd 19.06	mean 26.71 sd 22.60	-0.25
	n = 63	n = 88	
Lines of Partial Quote/Paraphrase (indirect news voice)	mean 15.87 sd 12.03	mean 25.46 sd 17.91	-3.69 *

* $p < .0001$ (1-tail)

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NOTES

[1] Jan Schaffer, "Civic Efforts Can Generate Innovative Research," *Civic Journalism Interest Group News* (Winter 1999): 1-3.

[2] For example, Judy McGregor, Margie Comrie, and Susan Fountaine, "Beyond the Feel-Good Factor: Measuring Public Journalism in the 1996 New Zealand Election Campaign," *Harvard International Journal of Press and Politics* 4 (winter 1999): 66-77; Rick Thames, "Public Journalism and the 1992 Elections," in *Assessing Public Journalism*, ed. Edmund B. Lambeth, Philip Meyer, and Esther Thorson (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press), 111-122; Frank Denton and Esther Thorson, "Effects of a Multimedia Public Journalism Project on Political Knowledge and Attitudes," in *Assessing Public Journalism*, ed. Edmund B. Lambeth, Philip Meyer, and Esther Thorson (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press), 143-157; Sharon Hartin Iorio, "Public Discourse, Economic/Fiscal Policy Issues, and Civic Journalism" (paper presented at the annual meeting of AEJMC, August 1998, Baltimore, MD); Eric Rhodenbaugh, "Missing the Link: Citizen-Based Journalism Intent Rather than Election Coverage Content Affects Public Trust in Media" (paper presented at the annual meeting of AEJMC, August 1998, Baltimore, MD); Jennie Buckner, "Giving Voters a Voice," *Media Studies Journal* (winter 1997), available at http://www.mediastudies.org/cov96/buckner.html; Michael Gartner, "Seeing Through the Gimmicks," *Media Studies Journal* (winter 1997), available at http://www.mediastudies.org/cov96/gartner.html; Philip Meyer and Deborah Potter, "Effects of Citizen-Based Journalism in the 1996 National Elections" (paper presented at the annual meeting of AEJMC, August 1997, Chicago, IL); Amy Reynolds, "The 1996 Presidential Campaign, Civic Journalism and Local TV News: Does 'Doing Civic Journalism' Make Any Difference?" (paper presented at the annual meeting of AEJMC, August 1997, Chicago, IL); James R. Bowers, with Blair Claflin and Gary Walker, "A Case Study from Rochester, New York: The Impact of Civic Journalism Projects on Voting Behavior in State-Wide Referendums," available from http://www.pewcenter.org/r_rochester.html; David Blomquist and Cliff Zukin, "Does Public Journalism Work? The 'Campaign Central' Experience," available at http://www.pewcenter.org/r_does.html.

[3] Pamela J. Shoemaker and Stephen D. Reese, *Mediating the Message: Theories of Influences on Mass Media Content* (White Plains, NY: Longman, 1996), 102.

[4] Laura Flanders, *Real Majority, Media Minority: The Cost of Sidelining Women in Reporting* (Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press, 1997); Joe S. Foote and Cynthia Price, "Women Correspondent Visibility, 1983-1997" (paper presented at the annual meeting of AEJMC, August 1998, Baltimore, MD); Vernon Stone, "Minorities and Women in Television News: 1999 Projections," available from http://www.missouri.edu/~jourvs/gtvminw.html; "Newspaper Journalists Examined in Major Study: Demographics, Political Outlook, Views on Coverage Revealed," American Society of Newspaper Editors, 10 April 1997, available from http://www.asne.org/kiosk/news/workforce.htm; Shoemaker and Reese, *Mediating the Message*, 66-67.

[5] Anat First and Donald L. Shaw, "Not There Yet: Coverage of Women in Foreign News: A 1995 Multi-National Study" (paper presented at the annual meeting of AEJMC, Anaheim, CA, August 1996).

[6] H. Leslie Steeves, "Gender and Mass Media Communication in a Global Context," in *Women in Mass Communication*, ed. Pamela J. Creedon (London: Sage, 1993).

[7] Judy Delano Brown, Carl R. Bybee, Stanley T. Wearden, and Dulcie Murdock Straughan, "Invisible Power: Newspaper News Sources and the Limits of Diversity," *Journalism Quarterly* 64 (spring 1987): 45-54.

[8] Daniel C. Hallin, Robert Karl Manoff, and Judy K. Weddle, "Sourcing Patterns of National Security Reporters," *Journalism Quarterly* 70 (winter 1993): 753-766.

[9] Steven L. McShane, "Occupational, Gender, and Geographic Representation of Information Sources in U.S. and Canadian Business Magazines," *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 72 (spring 1995): 190-204.

[10] "Women's Visibility on Network Newscasts Still Low, but Roles Changing on Morning Shows," Women, Men and Media, available at http://www.mediastudies.org/women.html.

[11] W. Joseph Cambell and Robert L. Stevenson, "Women as Global Newsmakers and Correspondents: Does Press Freedom Matter?" (paper presented at the annual meeting of AEJMC, Chicago, IL, August 1997); First and Shaw, "Not There Yet."

[12] Marian Meyers, "News of Battering," *Journal of Communication* 44 (spring, 1994): 47-63.

[13] K. McGrath, "Women and Newspapers," *Newspaper Research Journal* 14 (spring 1993): 95-110.

[14] Dennis McQuail, *Mass Communication Theory* (London: Sage, 1994), 203.

[15] Lee Jolliffe and Terri Catlett, "Women Editors at the 'Seven Sisters' Magazines, 1965-1985: Did They Make A Difference?" *Journalism Quarterly* 71 (winter 1994): 800-808.

[16] Katherine N. Kinnick, "Gender Bias in Newspaper Coverage of the 1996 Olympic Games: A Content Analysis of Five Major Dailies" (paper presented at the annual meeting of AEJMC, Chicago, IL, August 1997).

[17] Sigman L. Splichal and Bruce Garrison, "Gender as a Factor in Newsroom Managers' Views on Coverage the Private Lives of Politicians," *Mass Communication Review* 22 (1-2, 1995): 101-108.

[18] Jo Ellen Fair, "The Body Politic, The Bodies of Women, and the Politics of Famine in U.S. Television News Coverage of Famine in the Horn of Africa," *Journalism Monographs* 158 (August 1996); Phyllis Miller and Randy Miller, "The Invisible Woman: Female Sports Journalists in the Workplace," *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 72 (winter 1995): 883-889; Carol Liebler, "How Race and Gender Affect Journalists' Autonomy," *Newspaper Research Journal* 15 (summer 1994): 112-130; "Women Reporting on International News," International Women's Media Foundation, available from http://www.iwmf.org/resource.htm.

[19] See Pamela J. Shoemaker and Stephen D. Reese, *Mediating the Message: Theories of Influence on Mass Media Content*, 2nd Ed. (White Plains, NY: Longman, 1996).

[20] For a discussion of this point, see Lynn M. Zoch and Judy VanSlyke Turk, "Women Making News: Gender as a Variable in Source Selection and Use," *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 75 (winter 1998): 764-65.

[21] Edmund B. Lambeth, "Introduction," in *Assessing Public Journalism*, ed. Edmund B. Lambeth, Philip E. Meyer and Esther Thorson (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1998), 1-12.

[22] Sally McMillan, Macy Guppy, Bill Kunz and Raul Reis, "Public Journalism: What Difference Does It Make to Editorial Content?" in *Assessing Public Journalism*, ed. Edmund B. Lambeth, Philip Meyer and Esther Thorson (Columbia, MO.: University of Missouri Press, 1998), 178-190; Renita Coleman, "The Visual Communication of Public Journalism: A Content and Textual Analysis" (paper presented at the annual meeting of AEJMC, August 1998, Baltimore, MD); Andrea Verykoukis, "A Journalism Less Ordinary? The Inspiring Tone of Public Journalism" (paper presented at the annual meeting of AEJMC, August 1998, Baltimore, MD); David O. Loomis, "Is Public Journalism Cheap Journalism? Putting Public Journalists' Money Where Their Mouths Are" (paper presented at the annual meeting of AEJMC, August 1998, Baltimore, MD); McGregor et. al, "Beyond the Feel-Good Factor."

[23] Lambeth, "Introduction," 1.

[24] Edmund B. Lambeth, "Public Journalism as Democratic Practice," in *Assessing Public Journalism*, ed. Edmund B. Lambeth, Philip E. Meyer and Esther Thorson (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1998), 17.

[25] Susan Willey, "Civic Journalism in Practice: Case Studies in the Art of Listening," *Newspaper Research Journal* 19 (Winter 1998): 16-29.

[26] Arthur Charity, *Doing Public Journalism* (NY: Guilford, 1995).

[27] Robert M. Entman, "Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm," *Journal of Communication* 43 (autumn, 1993): 51-58.

[28] Vincent Price and David Tewksbury, "News Values and Public Opinion: A Theoretical Account of Media Priming and Framing," in *Progress in Communication Sciences, Vol. 13: Advances in Persuasion*, George Barnett and Franklin J. Boster ed. (Norwood, NJ: Ablex, 1997); Dolf Zillman, Rhonda Gibson, S. Shyam Sundar, and Joseph W. Perkins Jr., "Effects of Exemplification in News Reports on the Perception of Social Issues," *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 73 (summer 1996): 427-444; Shanto Iyengar, *Is Anyone Responsible? How Television Frames Political Issues* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1991); S. Horning, "Science Stories: Risk, Power, and Perceived Emphasis," *Journalism Quarterly* 67 (autumn 1990): 767-776; William A. Gamson, "News as Framing: Comments on Graber," *American Behavioral Scientist* 33 (Nov.-Dec. 1989): 157-161.

[29] Rhonda Gibson and Dolf Zillman, "Effects of Citation in Exemplifying Testimony on Issue Perception," *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 75 (spring 1998): 167-176; Rhonda Gibson and Dolf Zillman, "The Impact of Quotation in News Reports on Issue Perception," *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 70 (winter 1993): 793-800.

[30] Jay Rosen, *Community Connectedness: Passwords for Public Journalism* (St. Petersburg, FL: The Poynter Institute for Media Studies, 1993); Jay Rosen and Davis Merritt, *Public Journalism: Theory and Practice* (Dayton, OH: Kettering Foundation, 1994); Jay Rosen, "Making Things More Public: On the Political Responsibility of the Media Intellectual," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 11 (December 1994): 362-88; Davis Merritt, *Public Journalism & Public Life: Why Telling the News Is Not Enough* (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1995).

[31] Jay Rosen, "Project on Public Life and the Press: Report on Activities, 1993-1994" (paper presented to the meeting of Newspaper-Related Foundations, Miami, FL, January 1995), 13.

[32] "Public Agenda: A Proposal by the *Tallahassee Democrat* and WCTV," available from Tallahassee Democrat, P.O. Box 990, Tallahassee, FL, 32302-0990; "To Our Readers," *Tallahassee (FL) Democrat*, 22 October 1995, sec. F, p. 3. As part of its effort to institutionalize civic journalism, the *Democrat* incorporated its principles into a new mission statement and made that statement a matter of public record by publishing it in the newspaper, with reporters' and editors' signatures prominently displayed below it.

[33] *Sun* Managing Editor Curt Pierson, personal communication to author, 29 May 1995.

[34] In 1995 the *Sun*'s audited circulation averaged 55,400 weekday/Saturday and 60,300 Sunday copies, to the *Democrat*'s 57,000 weekday/Saturday and 78,000 Sunday copies (*Editor & Publisher International Yearbook*, 1996). Alachua County, from the *Sun* draws its primary readership, counted approximately 197,000 residents in 1995; the *Democrat*'s main circulation area of Leon County held about 9.5 percent more people that year (*Florida Statistical Abstracts*, 1995). Gainesville hosts the University of Florida and Tallahassee hosts Florida State University, the state's two largest public universities.

[35] Executive Editor Lou Heldman, the driving force behind the *Democrat*'s conversion to civic journalism, left the newspaper at the end of 1995 for a higher-position job with the newspaper's corporate owner, Knight-Ridder. His replacement arrived several months later, in 1996, and at the time held an unknown commitment to his civic-journalism effort. For those reasons, 1995 seemed the more promising ground for testing the *Democrat*'s use of civic journalism.

[36] Ronald D. Clark, "Foundations and Public Journalism" (paper presented at the meeting of Newspaper-related Foundations, Miami, FL, January 1995).

[37] Guido H. Stempel and Hugh M. Culbertson, "The Prominence and Dominance of News Sources in Newspaper Medical Coverage," *Journalism Quarterly* 61 (autumn 1984): 671-76; Hallin, Manoff, and Weddle, "Sourcing Patterns." Where necessary, line counts were converted to a standard 12-pica column-width format.

[38] Klaus Krippendroff, *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1980).

[39] Gender could not be determined from by-line name for two of 34 reporters in the 1995 *Democrat* sample, four of 32 reporters in the 1988 *Democrat* sample, and one of the 36 reporters in the 1995 *Sun* sample. That left 192 (90.5%) articles in the 1995 *Democrat* sample, 194 (84.4%) articles in the 1988 *Democrat* sample, and 278 (99.3%) articles in the *Sun* sample.

[40] Paul S. Voakes, Jack Kapfer, David Kurpius and David Shano-Yeon Chern, "Diversity in News: A Conceptual and Methodological Framework," *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 73 (autumn 1996): 585.

[41] Voakes et. al, "Diversity in News," 584.

[42] Zoch and Turk, "Women Making News," 771.

[43] Online descriptions of the newspapers' civic-journalism efforts can be accessed through http://www.pewcenter.org/projects.html and http://www.cpn.org/sections/topics/journalism/stories-studies.

[44] Meyer, "If It Works," 263.

[45] David D. Kurpius, "Public Journalism and Commercial Local News: In Search of a Model (paper presented at the annual meeting of AEJMC, August 1998, Baltimore, MD); Coleman, "The Visual Communication of Public Journalism."